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MARCH 11 1983

Africa and India 234	Fiction 248-9
Cinema 233	Ireland 251
Classical Literature 242	Islam 241
Commentary 238-9	Memoirs 237
Economics 229	Music 243
Eastern Europe 250	Philosophy 230-1, 244-7
English Literature 232	Poetry 235-6
	Politics 227-9

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

AYER, A. J. <i>Philosophy in the Twentieth Century</i> [Mark Platts]	246
BARON, JONATHAN <i>Belfast: An Illustrated History</i> [Sybil Gribbon]	251
BARNES, JONATHAN <i>Aristotle</i> [Sarah Waterlow]	247
BOYLAN, CLARA <i>Holy Pictures</i> [Linda Taylor]	248
BUXTON, R. G. A. <i>Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peltio</i> [Robert Parker]	242
CAUTE, DAVID <i>Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia</i> [Ooffrey Wheatcroft]	234
CHISHOLM, ROGERICK M. <i>The Foundation of Knowing</i> [David Smith]	246
CIORANESCU, ALEXANDRE <i>Ion Barbu</i> [Virgil Nemoianu]	230
CRAIG, MAURICE <i>The Architecture of Ireland: From the earliest times to 1880</i> [The Knight of Glin]	231
EVANS, OARETH <i>The Varieties of Reference</i> [Charles Taylor]	239
FORSYTH, KAREN <i>Ariadne auf Naxos by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss: Its Genesis and Meaning</i> [Michael Tonner]	243
HARE, R. M. <i>Plato</i> [Sarah Waterlow]	241
HARTMANN, RUDOLF <i>Richard Strauss: The Staging of His Operas and Ballets</i> [Michael Tanner]	243
HELLER, AONES <i>A Theory of History</i> [Adam Mortoo]	247
HERBERT, FRANK <i>The White Plague</i> [Rox Kaveney]	249
JANKO, RICHARD <i>Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns</i> [Stephanie West]	242
JANOS, ANORAW C. <i>The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945</i> [Alan Sked]	250
LEM, STANISLAW <i>More Tales of Pirx the Pilot</i> [Colin Greenland]	249
LEWIS, BERNARD <i>The Muslim Discovery of Europe</i> [J. D. Gurney]	241
LOWNOES, WILLIAM <i>The Theatre Royal at Bath</i> [Isabel Colegate]	236
MACKIE, J. L. <i>The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the existence of God</i> [Bernard Williams]	231
MCGINN, COLIN <i>The Character of Mind</i> [Jonathan Lear]	246
MERTHA, VEO <i>A Family Affair: India Under Three Prime Ministers</i> [Tapan Raychaudhuri]	234
MESEORINI, GIOVANNI BATTISTA <i>My Wife Maria Chius</i> [Stephen Pickles]	243
MINOT, STEPHEN <i>Surviving the Flood</i> [Lewis Jones]	249
OLSON, MANCUR <i>The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities</i> [Alain Cairncross]	229
OSBORNE, CHARLES <i>The World Theatre of Wagner: A Celebration of 150 Years of Wagner Productions</i> [Michael Tanner]	243
PRAGOR, EMILY <i>A Visit from the Footbinder and other stories</i> [Savkar Altin]	246
QUALLS, BARRY V. <i>The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The novel as book of life</i> [Dennis Walder]	233
ROBINSON, FRANCIS <i>Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500</i> [Robert Irwin]	247
SCHAUER, FREDERICK <i>Free Speech: a philosophical enquiry</i> [J. N. Gray]	244
SCUTON, ROGER <i>A Dictionary of Political Thought</i> [Jeremy Waldron]	242
SEGAL, CHARLES <i>Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae</i> [Oliver Taplin]	237
SHERWIN, NEO <i>A Small Thing - Like an Earthquake</i> [John Stokes]	248
SILVERBERG, ROBERT <i>Surprise on Mercury</i> [Colin Greenland]	233
SLATER, MICHAEL <i>Dickens and Women</i> [Hermione Lee]	248
ST AUBIN OR TERAN, LISA <i>The Slow Train to Milan</i> [Nicholas Shakespeare]	221
STRAIGHT, MICHAEL <i>After Long Silence</i> [Noël Annan]	249
STRAUS, PETER <i>Floating Dragon</i> [Alan Bold]	233
TAYLOR, JOHN RUSSELL <i>Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Emigrants 1933-1950</i> [S. S. Prawer]	233
TAYLOR-MARTIN, PATRICK <i>John Betjeman: His Life and Work</i> [Craig Raine]	245
TRIOO, ROGER <i>The Shaping of Man: Philosophical Aspects of Sociobiology</i> [Gnora O'Neill]	229
WATTS, EMILY STUBBS <i>The Businessman in American Literature</i> [Gavin Ewart]	248
WESTMILLER, LINA <i>The Head of Aiyie</i> [Victoria Rothschild]	227
WEST, NOEL <i>A Matter of Trust: M15 1945-72</i> [Noël Annan]	231
WILLIAMS-ELLIS, AMABEL <i>All Strangers are Cousins</i> [Hilary Spurling]	245
WOLLHEIM, RICHARD, and HOPKINS, JAMES (Editors) <i>Philosophical Essays on Freud</i> [Kathleen Wilkes]	230
VAS, ZOLTÁN <i>Vizsgálódások életem: Önéletrajz I. Akkori önmegnevelés: Önéletrajz II.</i> [Ogeorge Mikeas]	239

COMMENTARY

Exhibitions <i>Henry William Bunbury</i> (Oalsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk) [David Alexander]	239
Television <i>Wenceslaus Hollar, Prints and Drawings</i> (British Museum) [Malcolm Rogers]	239
<i>Edmund Kean</i> (Channel 4) [Peter Kemp]	238
<i>The Clopparas</i> (BBC 2) [John Ray]	238
Theatre <i>JOHN RETALLACK: Berlin, Berlin</i> (Donmar Warehouse) [Rocold Hayman]	238
<i>MICHAEL WILCOX: Lent</i> (Lyric Studio, Hammersmith) [Harold Hobson]	238
Sale of autograph letters and MSS. Sarah Bradford	238
Poems by Connie Bensley and Tony Harrison	230
Fifty years on ...	231
Letters on Subliding Literature, 'Earth to Earth', 'Difficult Women'	231
Among this week's contributors	231

POLITICS

MICHAEL STRAIGHT

After Long Silence
351pp. Collins. £11.95.
0002170019

NOEL WEST

A Matter of Trust: M15 1945-72
166pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£3.75.
0397782533

Oddly enough the fiercest spy-hunters - Rebecca West, Andrew Boyle and most relentless and well-informed of them all, Christopher Pincher - scarcely concern themselves with the psychology of their traitors and spies. When Boyle exposed Anthony Blunt, he called his book *The Climate of Treason*, but the climate - the intellectual climate - was the one thing he was unable to describe. They may, of course, distrust ideas as such. The fiction of treating human behaviour as conditioned by events in infancy or by impersonal forces to history has been conveniently used to exempt individuals from moral responsibility. Perhaps the spy-busters feared that to examine the ideas of the 1930s might appear to mitigate the villainy of the spies. For villains they were. Philip sent dozens of Soviet defectors and men and women in East Europe, who had been British agents informing against the Nazis to their deaths. Blunt, who worked in such a sensitive and important part of M15 that his colleagues accepted that he was not obliged to share his secrets with them, was not far behind Philip in his villainy. And they had escaped retribution. The spy-busters wrote from a justifiable sense of outrage.

Before the war men who spied against their own country were in popular imagination either reckless officers like Esterhazy driven into it by blackmail or ruinous gambling or a rapacious mistress; or they were in fiction faceless anarchists such as Mr Verloc or vain, venal agents such as Charles Latimer MP. Now there emerged a new kind of spy. Orahram Greene has compared him to the Jews in Elizabethan England, a spy dedicated to the service of another country which he believed to be the salvation of the world. The analogy is belated. Men and women who had been converted to the most hypnotic

The clutches of comradeship

Noël Annan

secular religion of the day were induced to become its undercover agents. How? Michael Straight, who was recruited as an undergraduate by Anthony Blunt at Cambridge to spy for what is now the KGB, attempts to answer.

It is not an altogether convincing answer. It is too autobiographical to be a study of the times and yet not autobiographical enough. Mr Straight does not face the issues which he raises about himself. His book is enormously readable in the way that a Sunday serial is readable and, as a narrative, is riveting. It is written in short paragraphs which package ideas and people. He rarely explores them. To him there is a simple explanation of his vulnerability to the spy-masters. He had no roots; he was a second-generation progressive; and he was ashamed of his money. Born a Whitney, he should have had roots, but his mother had remarried some years after his father's death and Michael had been whisked away to England - and to a somewhat quirky enclave. For his mother's new husband was Leonard Blumhirst, and together, with her fortune they started Dartington Hall. Dartington was certainly a community, but it was not conspicuous among public schools for hallowing England's traditions. It dedicated itself to pulling up roots rather than putting them down.

The children of indomitable progressives are often puzzled in adolescence how to assert their individuality. Michael Straight inherited his mother's qualities - with a twist. Disagreement or contravention was foreign to his nature. She gave a resigned smile and settled on like a floor swamping the vulgar tramp steamer that had dared to hoot at her. He, on the other hand, feared to meet a challenge or assert himself - he hated hurting or offending anyone. His mother was dedicated to changing human nature, he was dedicated to changing the world. She created love, he craved love. His dashing elder brother loomed over him and, uninhibited, enjoyed his wealth. Michael Straight agonized about his. Someone told his cousin, the future ambassador to the Court of St James, that Michael felt guilt because he was wealthy. "Wealthy?" exclaimed Jack Whitman with a fine sense of the distinction between the rich and the very rich. "What makes him blink he's

wealthy?" Still, among his fellow students at LSE he undeniably was. There in 1933 he studied under Harold Laski for a year waiting to pass the entrance exam to Cambridge and gravitated straight to the Socialist Society which had been taken over by the Communists. He went on his first demo and felt ashamed not to know the words of the Internationale. Then he was passed on by the comrades to John Comford and James Klugman at Cambridge. It was a textbook induction.

He made an instant impact upon his contemporaries. One of them, Frank Singleton, described it. Straight was "handsome, gifted, versatile, precocious, virile. What on earth was he not? He played squash with one of the Stewells (or was it the Sassoons), and he loved the masses." His quick wits and ability won him a first in economics and his naive sincerity quelled any suspicion that he was on the make when he decided to climb the worldly ladder of the Cambridge Union. What was he after? What, when one is young, thoughtful and troubled, is one always after? To define reality; to escape from the loneliness and the uncertainty of oneself. But what was reality? Was it the despair of the college servant his brother handed on to him, when Michael dismissed him, said "But if gentlemen like you don't employ us, what is to become of us?" Or was it the strike in Norwich which Comford told him was not, as Straight thought, a symbol of the class struggle, but the class struggle itself? He came to accept reality as Party doctrine hammered out in innumerable discussions late into the night as Comford and Klugman educated their acolytes. Was it not proved that the Soviet Union alone would resist fascism and that the capitalist economies were doomed to collapse or become fascist? Gravely they concluded that it was so.

But young Communists not only use the word comrade but give it meaning. For the first time Straight had the sense of belonging to a group, a team, with his own language, pass-words, jokes and loyalty. Intellectuals despise comradeship when they see the shape it takes among their hearty contemporaries singing rag songs or burning a boat. Yet they long for it every bit as much. The innumerable societies at universities which spring up and wither

after one or two student generations are the offspring of this craving. Communism supplied it for that generation of intellectuals. Now they could escape the charge of being irresponsible gadflies or remote intellectuals who fiddled while Rome burnt. I remember a contemporary of mine, cynical, rocklessly clever and deflating, a fantasist, who at Cambridge was driven by his desire to belong to something more than himself. He was physically inept but tried and failed to cox a boat and win a boxing Blue. In the end he joined the Party. No one who knew his former sense of humour and his keen ooze for cant would have credited it.

Nothing in the 1930s - conversion to Roman Catholicism, Buddhism, pacifism, or homosexual practices and parties - gave postulants such a sense of being initiated into the arcane and outraging the elderly as adopting the speech, manners and ideology of the Communists. It was more anti-patriotic than pacifism, more subversive of *blen-pensant* morality than homosexuality, and apparently more directly concerned with the wickedness of the world and its salvation than religion. When Straight went through his letters of those days, he was certain that it was this, rather than the intellectual appeal of Communism, that kept him captive. "I'm filled with a violent uncontrollable love for them; an extraordinary sense of comradeship," he wrote to his mother in November 1935. "It's unreasonable and inexplicable. It burns within me and I can't express it; I can't get it out." That was written after the night when Klugman invited him to meet Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt - after which Blunt took a special interest in him.

Comradeship - the intense daily activity of his circle in Trinity out of which he seldom moved - so cocooned Straight that he never considered some other version of reality. Even today he seems to forget that the vast majority of Cambridge undergraduates were uninterested in politics and regarded the martyrs selling the *Daily Worker* outside the Mill Lane lecture-rooms with derision. "All Trinity," he writes, "was in an uproar in May 1936, because he had sent a petition to the Fellows demanding that the college servants' wages should be raised. In fact most Trinity undergraduates had never heard of it. They had never heard of it because Straight was far too

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slogans of Peace ("Scholarships not Battleships" was the slogan on Straight's virgin demo); then, as now, a high-minded pacifist movement responded. Finally there was the belief that the Soviet Union was the only state which remotely suggested a new society and that its backwardness and even its mistakes – no fellow-traveller ever called them crimes – could be explained away. Were those mistakes not venial, it was argued, compared with the rapacity of entrepreneurs and the callous way they threw human beings on the scrap-heap of unemployment?

It was not the ethos of the Apostles and E. M. Forster which abetted this softness towards the Soviet Union. It was more the hard-headed toughness on which some technocrats or scientists such as "Sage" Bernal or C. P. Snow (a fellow-traveller in one sense to the end of his life) prided themselves. They believed that only a communist society would use scientific methods to improve the standard of living, and that the "future" lay with Soviet Russia. This produced a reverence for anything Russian which at times was comical. Straight records a trip to Moscow made by himself and half a dozen of the leading lights of the Left. The story which circulated round Cambridge on their return was that he was seen stroking a chimney-piece in the Kremlin and heard to murmur "Soviet (imber, Soviet marble)" "Bow down and worship wood and stone?" exclaimed Charles Fletcher-Cooke, "Certinly not!"

The contemporary who inspired Straight at Cambridge was John Cornford, and he gives a fine account of that fierce, pure, immensely able, narrow, intense figure. He calls him a romantic but Cornford was someone who had to live up to his ideals and therefore fought in Spain – and the word romantic masks the mastery of the organizer. There is little attempt to portray Guy Burgess, who surfaces memorably every so often, like a shark, teeth bared, to hypnotize and menace. But astonishingly able as a plotter, and adept at thwarting any person who threatened the achievement of his aims as was this wayward, unstable, clever, drunken, scandalously homosexual figure of countless escapades, Straight is wrong in implying that he was a Svengali, the "invisible man" behind Blunt. Hammy by right in believing that Burgess seized on the opportunity created by Cornford's death on the Córdoba front to exploit Straight's grief and recruit him as a talent-spotter, but the Russian espionage network, to protect itself, operated from London, and the major spy-master sat there, not in Cambridge. Blunt told Straight – most gently, most kindly, but implacably – that he must first pretend to suffer a breakdown and renounce, as it were in disgust, his Party ties; and then return to America and use his family connections to get into Wall Street or government service and operate as a spy.

Straight reminds one of Morton Dasher in *The Wings of the Dove*. He was weak, muddle-headed and indecisive, yet he would not commit the final act of infamy. He could not load two lives and deceive his friends. When his Russian contact contacted him, he left the State Department and handed him only his own assessments of American policy, including a plea to Stalin not to make the Nazi-Soviet pact stronger than a partnership of necessity. He became a speech-writer for Roosevelt, campaigned against the American Left who opposed intervention in the war and became a pilot in the US Air Force.

After the war he was still very much a man of the Left, a sort of Nonplacit. With unerring bad judgment he backed Henry Wallace, and made him editor of the *New Republic*, which Straight owned. Straight fought the Communists who were making Wallace their front man in his campaign against Truman, but he does not choose to examine why he then so obsessively hostile to the foreign policy of his own country. (His account of Wallace, who used to fall asleep at every meeting, is unforgettable.) Still on the peace jag he could not come to terms with his past. On the one hand he did not doubt it was his duty as a citizen to testify in the days of McCarthy that some of those under suspicion were in fact Communists and that others were not. That was courageous; and Straight took a decision many liberals were not

honest enough to take. On the other hand, when challenged about his past in the 1940s by that astute economic analyst, Eliot Janeway, he ducked the issue and withdrew from a contest for a Congressional seat. On a visit to London he met Burgess, who quizzed him on his change of heart. What Burgess and Blunt wanted to know was whether he had denounced or would denounce them; and Burgess still exerted such mesmeric power that Straight decided – if that is the word – that he could not do so.

Why in the end did he? Straight gives various answers, none of them totally convincing. Possibly he may have thought it unfair to inform on those to whom he had been bound by such intimate terms of friendship when he was young. In our youth are so many of our follies – and so many of our loyalties. To renounce one's past is always distasteful – and particularly painful for those who put their trust in such abstractions as peace and social justice. One suspects that ambition had something to do with it. By the time of the Kennedy era he was disenchanted with the politics of protest, a family row had forced him to sell the *New Republic* and he had become a novelist. "Good causes", he writes revealingly, "were hard to find." But when he began to be offered posts in government agencies set up to endow the arts, he knew that to accept would mean security clearance by the FBI and the only course was to denounce himself. He wanted such posts. Men in their fifties often do – they want to be recognized by the world, they want to run something. So he took the plunge. Motives must be distinguished from the rightness of moral decisions. What ever propelled him, his action was right and honourable.

The British, however, might have had to wait for years to learn what he had to tell. It was only by chance that William Sullivan of the FBI, wanting to get his own back on J. Edgar Hoover, tipped off an MI5 officer, who happened to be visiting Washington to talk to Straight. The FBI had in fact identified Blunt as one of the things which Burgess and Maclean defected. Straight volunteered to go to London for further debriefing and consoled himself that if he incriminated some he could clear others among his former Communist contemporaries. He does not show how – presumably by his assessment of their characters not their abilities. One of them, now dead, was most adept as a student in the role given him by the Party of enrolling Asian and African students (among them that fine Indian politician, S. M. Karamaniam). After the war he displayed the same ability and distinction as a don but no one could have been more genuinely hostile to Communism. But one wonders whether Mr Straight ever read his work – for if he did not, how could he judge?

"With that my role as an informer came to an end", concludes Straight. "It is a role that is despised in every country." It runs counter to a determination we all share – not to inflict pain upon others. In 1981 he was identified as having informed upon Leo Long as well as Blunt, and the press descended on him, unjustly pillorying him too as a spy. He declares he was "more than willing to bear some part of the punishment". There speaks the authentic voice of liberalism – individuals as well as its weakness in failing to recognize the duties men owe to the State. When anyone writes an apology it is natural to ask oneself how far it is true. Sometimes a detail strikes one as dubious. On that trip to London after the war can it really be true that he met Burgess by chance walking down Whitehall? Might there not have been a phone-call prompted by what? Curiosity? What in those heady *New Republic* days was the state of his mind? But by and large the account rings true to me. A less honest man would have suppressed or distorted some of the stories. Straight is a gull in politics, but perhaps in the end the fact that he was born a Wasp and end Whitney – though not an infallible prophylactic – preserved his sense of honour.

Nigel West's history of MI5 is a different matter. It is a highly professional and reveals MI5's "order of battle", i.e. who at different dates headed which division or branch. Since it doesn't claim to be an official history, it seems highly likely that Mr West too has found sources who have served within the intelligence service so that

he is almost as well informed as Chapman Pincher. His book should confound, if anything can, the sly sceptics such as A. J. P. Taylor, who declare that spies never discover anything that an experienced journalist could not ferret out: so why get worked up about security or finance ludicrous operations? It is clear that Russia and the secret services of her satellite countries under the direction of the KGB continue to mount a massive operation against our own tiny security forces and latch on to the individuals in this, as in all Western countries, who work in sensitive official departments.

West's story begins with the arrest or exposure of the traitors who worked for the Nazis, but quickly shifts to the discovery of the atom-bomb spies, Nunn May and Fuchs. West soon shows how complicated an affair spying and the control of spies is. It resembles the parodies of baroque operas which Lytton Strachey used to write, in which the young men

appointment did not achieve what those who welcomed it expected. In 1952 White was convinced of Philby's guilt and built up such a case that the head of MI6, Menzies, much against his will was forced to demand Philby's resignation. Philby, of course, denied everything, and it would have been impossible to convict him in court. But some of Philby's colleagues in MI6 were outraged even though they had seen none of the evidence. They believed he had been martyred, just as Blunt's friends believed him to be traduced by Geronwy Rees's newspaper articles. Philby did not, as West says, "become" a journalist. It was fixed with the *Observer* and *The Economist*, and MI6 continued to pay him for his services at a time when he was probably organizing a network in Arab countries whose aim was to destabilize those régimes friendly to the West.

It remains a mystery why, when in 1956 White became head of that

accepted what Golytsin said as gospel, went back over their case-histories and came up with theories which first confounded and then were rejected by their superiors. More than one case officer followed Angleton into retirement, disaffected and disgruntled. Golytsin urged that there had been three, four, half-a-dozen Soviet moles burrowing in intelligence. Surely there must be one at the top of MI5, otherwise why did the KGB allow Blunt to leave it after the war?

And so began the attempt to discover the mole in MI5. First the deputy director was put under investigation, and then, when he was cleared after months of misery and his chief Sir Roger Hollis had retired, Hollis himself was investigated. As West says, the choice was not enviable; if no investigation took place, the suspected mole would continue to operate, yet if an investigation was set in motion the whole organization would be paralysed by self-doubt and new suspicions sown as fast as one was uprooted. Either way the KGB was triumphant. West, while admitting that no satisfactory explanation of incidents ever emerged, judges that the evidence against Hollis was circumstantial and categorically denies this. This is probably right, but we shall never know. The report made by Lord Trend did not categorically clear him. Sometimes, so it seems to me, the inequity of intelligence officers displayed in warring theories to account for the unaccountable resembles that of classical scholars justifying emendations in a corrupt text. Chance, misinformation, coincidence and muddle play a far greater part in the information they analyse than their nimble minds allow. So does the irrational. Forty years ago it proved difficult for military intelligence to predict how Hitler would react when the tide of war turned. Intelligence officers could not bring themselves to believe that Hitler could take such irrational military decisions as in fact he took. Only the other day it proved almost as difficult to predict accurately Galtieri's intentions. Explanations are sometimes too devious to account for "irrational" behaviour on the part of the enemy.

West's account of the stream of cases and the tentative remedies taken is so restrained that by its very sobriety the reader begins to ask himself who a democracy governed by the rule of law can do when its modest security service is swamped by KGB operations. For instance, MI5 was humiliated in the courts when Giuseppe Martelli of the Atomic Energy Authority was acquitted after being defended by Jeremy Hutchinson, generally acknowledged to be the most brilliant counsel of his day at the criminal bar. After that case, as West remarks, "it was now apparent that he was to be his own spy equipment and be in contact with the KGB provided one was not caught red-handed". Was Martelli approached by a Soviet agent who had no intention of obtaining secret information from him? Did the Soviet informer who shopped Martelli do so deliberately to expose the loopholes in the law and to sow discord between the FBI and MI5? Such were the suggestions sown by a single verdict to the courts. Hollis was to suffer further defeat in prosecutions with Hutchinson. Indeed, which showed that double agents and their like giving evidence were not too easily discredited in the eyes of the atoll British jury. For these setbacks MI5 got blamed; I think unjustly.

Indeed Blunt could still have continued to do his guile, for it is likely as if no prosecution could have succeeded against him. Maybe MI5 regarded it as a coup that the offer of immunity from prosecution produced the promise to cooperate. But may not Blunt have had the last laugh? As one reads between the lines of West's account his so-called "full confession" looks like fraud. He seems to have given little away, nothing that was not confirmed from other sources. Nothing, for instance, which established the guilt or innocence of Alistair Watson, nothing which enabled MI5 to make arrests or to regularize the strength that it had in the days of Guy Liddell.

After some scandals there was the usual outcry that the vetting procedures current at that time had failed to reveal Communist connections to the spy's past. Each time attempts are made to make yet more thorough enquiries into the background of govern-

ment employees. The truth is that positive vetting will continue to be a crude degree on the willingness of referees, friends or acquaintances to speak the whole truth and even to voice suspicions, anyone is willing to do so. Suppose one is approached by a friend whom one knows to have had a homosexual past in youth, does one decline to be searched? – in which case the decline will be cited for someone who knows nothing about his past (or indeed his present) activities. Or should one accept and tell all, or even more dubiously, refuse one's friend but inform the security services of one's doubts? There can be no doubt that one's duty as a British subject is to tell the truth, and not to sidestep the issue if someone is employed, or is seeking to be employed, in government service, he accepts *ipso facto* that his past must be an open book. But there may quite genuinely be cases where no vetting could have revealed a suspicious trace.

West makes one categorical statement with which I disagree. The conditions, he writes, which bred the ideological traitors have disappeared. Does he mean by this that spies will be recruited by the KGB and the satellite countries' organizations solely by blackmail, entrapment and financial inducements and that the days are past when genuinely convinced Marxists will be willing to be recruited as spies for the cause of Communism and the subversion of Western democracy? That would be a most optimistic view. The conditions in British universities and polytechnics in the 1960s and 70s were not all that dissimilar from the 1930s. It is true that among militant student bodies there was no enthusiasm for the Soviet Union. But anyone who had contacts with the International Marxist Group, the International Socialist or their successors, as well as with the Communist Party, and anyone who was among the organizers of the more disgraceful instances of intimidation and disruption to the years of student unrest, should certainly have a trace put against their name. The security services have no doubt made inquiries about the events of those years. The difficulty, as it was in the 1930s, is to discriminate between those who were at that age Trotskyites or members of the Party, but genuinely grew out of the beliefs of their youth, and those who still support the disruption of institutions in the West but have conveniently buried their beliefs. They are at least as dangerous as those well-known activists who have continued the wrecking tactics they practised in the NUS and student unions and who now conduct them in trade unions or in constituency parties. It is not necessary any longer to hollywood in Maoism or the doctrine of the Frankfurt School in order to sympathize with the aims of those who want to "do something about" the evils of capitalist society.

The very apparent, so it is said, that Burgess made to Blunt when he recruited him. What matters is the degree of hatred for the mixed economy of the Western democracies. You do not have to have been in intelligence yourself or to be a devotee of John le Carré to enjoy these two books. West reminds us just how relentless and single-minded the Soviet Union is in its attempts to disrupt, confound and break the spirit and morale of the West – a fact continually overlooked by so many well-meaning people. Straight believes that the future will be merciful to him and those of his contemporaries who were deluded; and in his last chapter, by quoting from the moving last pages of Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, he echoes Lear's prayer, "Pray you now; forget and forgive." Anyone who remembers Ivan Karamazov will understand. Unfortunately historians have overlooked the matter differently. They will think not of Karamazov but of Peter Verkhovensky and Stavrogin. They will remember that it took two centuries before the ideological struggle between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation became part of the past, and four centuries for the future to be merciful to both sides.

For these reasons the prosperous merchants, as a matter of conscience,

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Forces of obstruction

Alec Cairncross

MANCUR OLSON

The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities
273pp. Yale University Press. £8.95.
0 300 02307 3

Economists are inclined to be distrustful of general theories that purport to explain all the things that appear on Mancur Olson's dust-cover, from economic growth at different times and in many different places to present-day unemployment and stagflation. They have their own models which are more limited in range and are in terms of measurable variables like capital accumulation and market expansion. But as this influential study reminds them, these models do not tell us about "the ultimate causes of growth... what incentives made the saving and investment occur, or what explained the innovations or why there was more innovation and capital accumulation in one society or period than in another. Neither do they explain the alighting up of the channels of economic progress."

It is the "alighting up" that preoccupies Olson rather than the urge to save or innovate. He assumes that what has to be explained is not so much why development takes place but what holds it back. "In these days", he says, "it takes an enormous amount of stupid policies or bad or unstable institutions to prevent economic development." For an explanation he turns to the obstructive influence of social groups that exert pressure through lobbying or price-fixing to their own advantage and make "distributional gains" at the expense of others. Such group behaviour is not individual behaviour, with large and needs separate study and analysis, such as Olson has already

undertaken in *The Logic of Collective Action*. For the theory of group intervention developed there he claims great explanatory power and in this volume he tests that power in a number of arresting theses.

His argument is that in stable societies small groups pursuing selective interests tend to accumulate over time. Their influence is divisive and lowers efficiency. It becomes more difficult to adopt new technologies or re-allocate resources without protracted negotiations and a progressive slowing-down of the pace of growth. The "distributional gains" without much regard to the impact on growth. But this is a consequence of democracy, not social stability. Similarly, the effect of social upheavals on economic incentives extends well beyond what ceases to be mediated through group pressures: in post-war Germany the motives to effort were compelling and the habits formed persisted. On the other hand, it is not at all obvious that the influence of producer cartels and protectionism generally is a function of social rather than economic stability: falling prices and rising unemployment may do more to revive them than a tranquil political system. Even if one takes the British case, where there is not much doubt about the importance of "distributional coalitions" in slowing down growth, what has to be explained is not just the slower rate of growth in comparison with the Continent but the acceleration in comparison with pre-war years to what was probably the fastest rate ever experienced in Britain.

When the slate is wiped clean, as after a long war or a revolution, the impediments to growth are removed and there is a spurt until sclerosis begins to set in again. Where there are no social upheavals, the distributional cartels, trade unions, or other interested groups, take a firm grip. Government regulation becomes more complex and wider in scope and decision-taking is slowed down by the need for negotiation and bargaining. Society takes a different direction and the pattern of incentives is fundamentally altered: "the incentive to produce is diminished; the incentive to seek a larger share of what is produced is increased."

Olson is at pains to emphasize that his theory is not a complete

explanation of the phenomena he discusses. It is one element whose importance in relation to others must vary with circumstances. But there are times when he dwells on the relentless increase over time of the influence of special groups as if other influences took second place. One may doubt whether such an increase is in the nature of things. The power of groups depends on the political system and vice versa. Political democracy increases the power of the under-dog and so does full employment; and it is not surprising if that power is exerted through the vote as well as through trade unions, to effect "distributional gains" without much regard to the impact on growth. But this is a consequence of democracy, not social stability. Similarly, the effect of social upheavals on economic incentives extends well beyond what ceases to be mediated through group pressures: in post-war Germany the motives to effort were compelling and the habits formed persisted. On the other hand, it is not at all obvious that the influence of producer cartels and protectionism generally is a function of social rather than economic stability: falling prices and rising unemployment may do more to revive them than a tranquil political system. Even if one takes the British case, where there is not much doubt about the importance of "distributional coalitions" in slowing down growth, what has to be explained is not just the slower rate of growth in comparison with the Continent but the acceleration in comparison with pre-war years to what was probably the fastest rate ever experienced in Britain.

At least there is no suggestion that the forces of obstruction are so indestructible that nothing, less than revolution or social upheaval will overcome them. Olson winds up with the hopeful conclusion that, in time, the damage caused by special interests to economic growth, as well as to full

employment, equal opportunity and social mobility, may yet be limited by wider awareness and fuller understanding. As he recognizes, there is something of a paradox in this. It implies that by taking thought (and reading Olson) stable societies can master the influence he describes. So perhaps they are not all-powerful at all.

On stagflation the thesis advanced is not very convincing. It amounts to saying that in the absence of trade unions workers would be free to strike wage bargains at levels that prevented involuntary unemployment. This is by no means obvious. It leaves out of account what governs profits and what goes on in the capital market. If competition forces down prices when wages are reduced, real wages and profit margins are unaffected and unemployment is unchanged. The fact is that wage bargains are not about real wages but about money wages and wage earners may not find it so easy to change real wages as the argument implies. The corollary that "inadequate aggregate demand is not the main or ultimate source of involuntary unemployment" is open to the same line of criticism. It is not the failure of the labour market to clear that is at the root of the trouble (although wage demands can force governments into deflationary policies) but the failure of the capital market to maintain a steady flow of expenditure in real terms. That failure is understandable in certain circumstances but does not occur in others. Olson's explanation on the other hand leaves the reader asking who we had on an entire generation without stagflation.

The last chapter which deals with all this is regarded by Mancur Olson as his *piece de résistance*. It will strike some readers differently. But they all have cause to be grateful for such an illuminating and readable treatment of major issues, written with boldness, verve and modesty.

Makers of money

Gavin Ewart

EMILY STILES WATTS

The Businessman in America
Literature
183pp. Athans: University of Georgia Press. \$16.
0 8203 0616 9

One difficulty with this book, for the British "general reader", will be unfamiliarity with some of the authors treated – arising from a reprehensible ignorance. What "businessman" immediately springs to mind? Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*? The young man Chad in *The Ambassadors*, whose family firm manufactured a necessary but unromantic, unnamed domestic article (chamberpot)? A capitalist monster or two from Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*? The "great" Gatsby? Or the Henry Ford character in *The Hucksters*, the one who upturns the water jug on the boardroom table and tells the preoccupation team from the advertising agency "It's all wet"? Another trouble is, of course, that business as an occupation, and office work, in general, is very seldom described in detail. People fight, make love, flirt, drink, eat in novels and plays, but they don't often sit at a desk and write letters beginning "Dear Sir".

Emily Watts tells us that *The Rise of Stas Lapham*, a novel by William Dean Howells, published in 1855, is usually regarded as "the first American business novel". Her thesis is that what before this, and before the anti-business novels of Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair, there was Puritan, tradition of business-bashing among the early settlers. Michael Pugh's *The Day of Doom* (1622) makes it clear that even honest profit-making is a way to Hell: "Your Gold is brass, your silver dross. Your righteousness is sin. And think you by his honesty eternal life to win? You much mistake, if for his sake you dream of exaltation. Whereas the same Greedy shame and meretricious damnation."

For these reasons the prosperous merchants, as a matter of conscience,

always donated a large proportion of their profits to the Puritan cause. Later, with Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) as the supreme example, the capitalist money-maker became more respectable and economic individualism an acceptable way of life.

Watts invokes Weber and Walzer, even D. H. Lawrence (*Studies in Classic American Literature*) and Benjamin Franklin as an authority on economic self-sufficiency, and individual liberty. The theories lie around, social, economic (Adam Smith) and, naturally, religious; but examples of businessmen still remain few. And only do Tocqueville says much about literature: "among democratic nations, a writer may flatter himself that he will obtain at a cheap rate a meagre reputation and a large fortune.... Democratic literature is always infested with a tribe of writers who look upon letters as a more trade; and for some few great authors who adorn it you may reckon thousands of idea-mongers."

Watts sees the "Yankee-Peddler", fast-talking purveyor of usually valueless merchandise, and the more deceitful and immoral Confidence Man, as prototype modern businessmen. Like Sam Slick, Captain Stubb, even Dickens's imported Scrooge, the snake-hating sibilants of whose names certainly accord with their characters. There follow Blizard in *Moby-Dick* (1851) – one of the few novels that actually treats a business in detail (the capture and butchering of whales) – the Confidence Man himself (Melville's reaction to Barnum's *Autobiography*) and the noble-talking Egbert.

Later businessmen include Dreiser's Frank Cowperwood, Lewis's *Babbalanza* (1922), Hemingway's unnamed salesman in *To Have and Have Not* (1937), William Faulkner's nameless (another Faulkner name), Fitzgerald's Gatsby and Monroe Stahr, Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim, Gaddis's *J.R.* (no relation)... they make a long list; they get nice, or at least a bit nicer. They have apologists (Gertrude Stein, James Dickey among them); but business itself, being a means to an end (money), remains dull in most of its detail, and The Great American Business Novel is yet to come.

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Tom Driberg's photograph in a Moscow park of Guy Burgess (right) and his Russian friend, Toby.

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The very spirit of domesticity

Hermione Lee

MICHAEL SLATER
Dickens and Women
465pp. Dent. £15.
0 460 04248 3

Perhaps you have once or twice laid down that book *David Copperfield* and thought, "How dearly that boy must have loved me, and how vividly this man remembers it!"

Dickens is writing in 1855 to Maria Beadnell, whom he has not seen for over ten years, and whose remembrance was to inspire the disenchanting reunion of Arthur Clennam and Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit*. The whole episode, and this letter in particular, perfectly illustrates the interplay between Dickens's real and fictive treatment of women, which is the subject of Michael Slater's book. Dickens's interest here is not in Maria, but in Maria's possible response to his feelings; more exactly, to his fictional version of his adult memories of his youthful love of "Dora". No wonder that in the fiction, as Slater points out, it does not occur to him to find anything ridiculous in Clennam's sentimental illusion that Flora, twenty-five years on, will be unchanged. It is fat, silly, romantic, chattering Flora who is made ridiculous.

This venereal sacrifice of Maria, in life as in art, on the altar of Dickens's emotions, suggests the two central problems for this book. One is that it is difficult to disentangle the characters of the women from Dickens's imperious imaginative uses of them. Slater works hard to "bring into focus" mother, sister, wife, sisters-in-law, daughters and mistress. Oddly, although her importance in Dickens's life is everywhere apparent, there is no separate chapter for Angela Burdett-Coutts: because there was a professional, not a domestic, relationship? But I felt by the end that his life should have been "Dickens's women". They don't have much life of their own. Kate's reminiscences about her father, Catherine's few pathetic traces ("If I were ever to see him by chance it would almost kill me"), Mary Hogarth's chatty notes, are the exception; most of these voices are doubly "shut up", first by the gaps in historical documentation, then by Dickens's fictions. And the other problem is that Dickens's fictionalizing of his life is enormously complex and peculiar, and it seems almost impossible for the writer who is hovering between biography and criticism not to oversimplify or misrepresent.

Slater tackles his rich material methodically, by dividing the book into three parts. In the first, "Experience

into Art", there is a chapter for Dickens's relationship with each of his women; in the second, there is a chronological account of his fictional treatment of women; finally, there is a summary of his "womanly ideal", deduced from his journalism as well as from his novels and stories.

Some of the biographical material - Dickens's resentment at his mother for letting him go back to the blacking factory, his devotion to his sister, his idealization of Mary Hogarth after her death - is already familiar to readers of Edgar Johnson, Philip Collins and other Dickensians. But Slater carefully re-examines much of the evidence. The break with Maria after 1833 may not have been as dramatic as has been supposed. Mary's affectionate relationship with her dazzling brother-in-law was probably "far less intense and more normal" than people have thought; Ellen Ternan may not have been, as she has been represented, "a hard-hearted little gold-digger". The usual criticisms of Catherine, Dickens's wife, for "clumsiness, lassitude and inefficiency" are reconsidered. Slater shows how Johnson loaded the dice against her: for example, during the move to a new house, Dickens described Catherine as being "all over paint"; Johnson "introduces an idea of mooning vacancy" by paraphrasing this as "Catherine's part was limited to wandering about getting herself 'all over paint'".

Though Slater's reinterpretations are mostly in the service of moderation and reasonableness, he doesn't sidestep the more bizarre or outrageous details of Dickens's family life: Catherine's jealousy of his erotic mesmerizing sessions with a neurotic Swiss lady; his offhand references to his wife's ten pregnancies and two miscarriages ("I may be considered to have done enough towards my country's population"), which Slater does his best to humanize; his repugnance to the idea of contraceptives; his obtaining a doctor's certificate of virginity for his sister-in-law Georgina as a way of quashing "scurrilous innuendoes". There are vivid cameo portraits: Dickens, aged nineteen, looking "sulky as a bear" if his mother danced with anyone at a family holiday in Broadstairs; "hackneyed" at the seaside encountering "the great Dickens with his wife and children"; Miss Hogarth all looking abominably coarse vulgar and happy; his near household contrivances ("We used to laugh at him sometimes and say we believed that he was personally acquainted with every nail in the house"); Mrs Carlyle complaining about Catherine's lavish hospitality ("Such an overloaded dessert!

pyramids of figs rising oranges - 'ach!'); a sighting of Dickens on "the Boulogne packet" with (presumably) Ellen Ternan: "travelling with him was a lady not his wife, nor his sister-in-law, yet he strutted about the deck with the air of a man bristling with self-importance"; and his last talk with his daughter Kate on a quiet summer night: "Again he was silent, gazing wistfully through the darkened windows; and then in a low voice spoke of his own life, and many things that he had scarcely ever mentioned to me before."

When he comes to the "fictionalizing" of the life, Slater continues reasonable and supple. He would not agree with this sort of feminist critique of Dickens:

As versions of womanhood, his abstracted ideals and caricatures are without substance or inner complexity; indeed they are without any kind of reality at all. (Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction*, 1979).

By contrast, Slater would argue that Dora is one of Dickens's "most impressive achievements", both as an "individual" and as "the embodiment of a critique of women's position in Victorian society". He holds that Dickens's translations of real women into his art are more indirect, as well as more successful, than has been supposed. Estella has more of Maria than of Ellen Ternan and Dickens's feelings about Maria are also part of David's admiration for Steerforth. Little Nell, the sensitive betrayed child, is more "like" Dickens's idea of himself as a child than she is "like" Mary Hogarth. More generally, Slater points to the extraordinary mixture of women as "viragoes" (his word), destroyers and angels of death, and women as "angels of the house". He notices the coy treatment of flirtatiously desecrated brothers, sisters, and the association of comfortable middle-aged women with nice things to eat. And he sums up Dickens's attitude to women persuasively. In life, Dickens could be shrewd about female characteristics (his guess that Steerforth's brilliant piece of analysis) and was sympathetic, up to a point, with working women, admiring Adelaide Procter's work for the Society for the Employment of Women. But he did not want them to move out of the domestic sphere:

We should doubt the expediency of her putting up for Marylebone, or being one of the Board of Guardians for St Pancras, or serving on a Grand Jury for Middlesex, or acting as High-Sheriff of any county, or taking the chair at a Meeting on the subject of the Income-Tax. (1851)

illustrator, as described to an ideal woman, is "the very spirit of morning, gladness, innocence, hope, love, domesticity, &c &c &c &c". In the fiction he seems to see "the social and sexual trials of his heroines as a sort of tragic nature which serves to bring them to their full womanly potential". Sexual aggression or self-assertion by a woman "as a person with her own needs, demands and desires" is always presented as grotesque.

All this is perceptive and useful, though not always strikingly new. The structure and language of the book, though, don't seem entirely satisfactory. Giving one chapter to each of the women, and then discussing their bearing on the fiction, necessitates awkward repetitions and anticipations. We have to bear twice about Dickens's escape to Doncaster Races to meet Ellen, twice about the coyness of Tom and Ruth Pinch, twice about the popular readings of an infantile love-story, twice about "the anarchic super-energetic dwarf" Quilp's dealings with women, and so on. Such repetitions draw attention to the book's simple, cosy, unexciting critical terminology. Peggoty is "a very human, believable mother-figure"; Nancy is made to "sound and behave in a movingly natural fashion" and is "a figure of genuine emotional complexity"; "Flora is splendid"; Florence Dombey as a child is "credibly and movingly dramatised"; Dickens does not "keep the spotlight on Louisa Gradgrind after her marriage, though it is 'sketched in by one or two telling glimpses'"; and her attraction to Harthouse is "convincingly dramatised"; Arthur Clennam is "the first of Dickens's male hopeless lovers to be brought centre stage and presented straight".

The same sort of repetitious, comfortably uninquiring language is applied to Dickens's most troubling characterizations of women ("the horrible virago-mother", "a huge anti-woman joke", "a straightforward virago brutality", "the standard virago, man-woman figure", "another vein of anti-woman humour", "predatory spinsters and man-hungry widows"), without any apparent qualms. Similarly, the delicate negotiation between life and fiction, which is the book's subject, is too often naively rendered in crude Freudian terms ("distanced", "re-enacting", "wish-fulfilment", "he seems to have projected the image forward, so to speak") or roughly approximated: "Surely what must have gone on in his mind - who can say how. 'Concerned as we are with what Dickens the artist made of his woman's experience of women'... 'Needless to say, this la-

fiction, not an account of Georgia's childhood."

The easygoing language and orderly structure of the book suggest that not enough thinking has been done about the obscure and complex transpositions between life and art. *Dickens and Women* wages a jocular, no-nonsense, very English rear-guard action against extreme or difficult interpretations. "The more sophisticated can, I suppose, read what a phallic meaning they wish" (John Steerforth's throwing a hammer at Rosa Dartle). "Whether, as some critics have alleged, Dickens intended his more sophisticated readers to understand that Miss Wade is actually a lesbian... is really of little moment." But the subject is full of extremes and difficulties, and this blithe approach doesn't begin to account for the peculiarities of Dickens's mind, or for the strangeness of some of Dickens's women:

Rosamond pig! I hardly think we ever could have had one, now I come to remember, for your own could never bear the sight of them in the shops, and used to say that they always put him in mind of very little babies, only the pigs had much fairer complexions; and he had a horror of little babies, too, because he couldn't very well afford any increase to his family, and had a natural dislike to the subject. (Mrs Nickleby.)

It isn't our stations to life that changes us, Mr Clennam; thought I - As I was saying, I was thinking of one thing and thinking of another, and thinking very much of the family. Not of the family in the present time only, but in the past time too. For when a person does begin thinking of one thing and thinking of another, in that manner as it's getting dark, what I say is, that all things seem to be present, and a person must get out of that state and consider before they say which which which. (Mrs Ticklet.)

Dare I hint at that worse time when, strung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the baad! And when my only prayer was to be taken off from there, and when it was such inexplicable agony and misery to be a part of the dreadful thing? (Esther.)

"Are you in pain, dear mother?" "I think there's a pain somewhere in the room," said Mrs Gradgrind, "but I couldn't positively say that I have got it."

the more robust Jane Eyre before her, also involves a Romantic search for authentic selfhood, defined in terms of innocence and the sanctity of "natural" feelings. But if she senses everything in her life operating through the *overtone* of Dickens's adds, through the voice of his impersonal narrator, a corrosive, doom-laden prose which sees so much more than cause for God's vengeance. Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot are more hopeful, it is less reliant on God; but it is in Dickens the contradictions are most blatant; the pilgrimage most obvious, and most obviously futile.

Barry Qualls's "reading" of his chosen novelists is limited by his lack of biographical or historical perspective: a lack damagingly evident in his close way with the term "emblem", which slides about from its archaic seventeenth-century sense to a handy associative idea that anything "symbolic" may be so labelled. Nevertheless, in the rich, and right, difficult, task of teasing out the implications of the popular religious sources of the great Victorian novel, he provides a helpful hand.

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Colonists in California

S. S. Praver

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Emigrés 1933-1950
256pp. Faber. £8.25.
0 571 11700 7

In his definitive study *Bertolt Brecht in America*, James K. Lyon showed how bright a light may be shed by a judicious combination of sophisticated literary and cultural criticism on the problems faced when they tried to repatriate their broken careers in Hollywood. John Russell Taylor's methods and materials are different. He has used published memoirs, biographies and film-reviews, together with specialized studies like that of Lyon, to sketch a much broader picture of émigrés from many countries and to include in his panorama not only film-makers of many kinds, but also those who came to Los Angeles and its surroundings in search of things other than fame, fortune and creative opportunities in moving pictures. The questions he asks include: "What did it feel like to be Thomas Mann or Bertolt Brecht or Arnold Schoenberg or Theodor Adorno in Los Angeles in the 1940s? How did these German/Austrian exiles relate to one another? How far, if at all, did they fit in with their environment? What effect did they have on America and what effect did America have on them?"

The first of these questions is the least well answered. Mr Taylor never persuades us that he is sufficiently well acquainted with the work of creative writers outside the film-world to tell us anything significant about their inner life or the development of their work. Again and again one feels that his judgment is based on ungrounded premises. Could anyone at all acquainted with Brecht's work from

the 1920s onwards really believe that he had not been chased back to Europe by the Committee on Un-American Activities he might be "virtually forgotten today"? How can someone who has even glanced at the title-page of Mann's *Doctor Faustus* commit himself to the statement that in that novel Mann "took up the subject he knew he needed to expose, the story of twentieth-century Germany, refracted through the experience of one fictional character, Adrian Leverkühn"? The most striking formal characteristic of *Doctor Faustus*, announced by a title that includes the words "as told by a friend", is of course that Leverkühn's experience is itself refracted through the consciousness of a second character, the narrator and arranger Serenus Zeitblom. One cannot help feeling that Taylor has cast his net too wide; that he would have done better to confine himself to émigrés connected with the film-world. He might then have been able to expand such an unsurprising statement as the one which tells us that German émigré actors found themselves condemned to play "a variety of sneering Nazis" by attempting to differentiate between their performances to such parts and to relate these to their earlier and later careers. Conrad Veidt's Nazis are obviously as different from Alexander Granach's as Albert Bassermann's titled fellow-traveller in *The Searching Wind* is from Walter Slezak's aristocratic agent in *Once Upon A Honeymoon*. Here too the question "What did it feel like?" might be pertinently raised. What satisfaction, if any, did Granach derive from playing those he hated most - the Jew-baiter Streicher in *The Hitler Gang*, a concentration-camp chief and torturer in *The Seventh Cross*? How did Martin Kosleck view a career devoted almost entirely to portraying a Goebbels far handsomer and more fascinating than the original? How did their Hollywood experiences and performances affect what important figures like Fritz Kortner and Curt Bois did after their return to Europe?

Brecht once summed up his feelings about Hollywood in a little poem which reads:

Every morning, to earn my bread
I go to the market where lies are bought.
Hopefully
I take my place among the vendors.

How many felt like that? How many obtained greater satisfactions than Brecht managed to do? *Strangers in Paradise* suggests some of the answers by means of important distinctions between the career and attitudes of film-directors who stayed on after the war - Lang, Preminger, Billy Wilder - and who therefore committed themselves to Hollywood and its ways; directors who, like Renoir and René Clair, made important films in their Californian years but then returned to their native country; and directors who stayed on the fringes, knowing that they could not work in the studio system in any really creative way, and for whom the war-years were therefore an interlude of waiting and watching. Luis Buñuel is, of course, the greatest example of this last category.

What *Strangers in Paradise* does exceedingly well is to distinguish the various groups of Californian exiles and to suggest their inter-relationships and their relation to other groups within and without the Hollywood studios. Taylor isolates a number of important figures and locales that provided centres for such groups: Ernst Lubitsch, Charles Laughton, Preston Sturges; the homes of Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Salma Viertel and Alma Mahler-Werfel; the Garden of Allah Hotel. We learn to distinguish a French colony, a German/Austrian colony, and - very important indeed - a colony of British exiles, with such centres as the Hollywood Cricket Club, whose main stalwarts were C. Aubrey Smith and the gentle Englishman who terrified the world under the name Boris Karloff. The book is particularly good on this British group; it has wise things to say about the (usually unjustified) charges that its members had deserted their native country in its hour of need, and dispels some widespread misconceptions

about its nature and coherence. Here the author has had the benefit of personal acquaintance with Boris Karloff and other participants in his story, and has collected much relevant material for his recent biography of the most famous of all English émigré directors: Alfred Hitchcock. He reminds us, incidentally, that Hollywood was not the only place in which refugee artists from Hitler's "new order" were brought into culturally fruitful contact with British colleagues. Many of the Europeans who came under his scrutiny worked, for a time, in England; and a study of their place within, and their impact upon, British film-making and publishing would provide an interesting and worthwhile supplement to *Strangers in Paradise*.

In a book that covers as much ground as this one there will obviously be room for disagreement. Many will feel, for instance, that while it is good to have points made and reinforced by a historical context, to be given some inkling of their source. We are told for instance, of a "surrealistic encounter" between Eisenstein and Sam Goldwyn, in the course of which Goldwyn said: "Please tell Mr Eisenstein that I have seen his film *Potemkin* and admire it very much. What we should like would be for him to do something of the same kind, but rather cheaper, for Ronald Colman." *Bien trouvé*, of course - but is it true? On what evidence does Mr Taylor assert that what Sternberg came from Germany to direct was "his own" adaptation of Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat*? *The Blue Angel* credit-titles, and a good deal of testimony from participants other than Sternberg himself, tell a different story. Nor is the description of the character Marlene Dietrich plays in that film as that of a "vicious" cabaret-singer at all well judged. Lola-Lola is no more "vicious", surely, than Pabst's (and Wedekind's) Lulu, whose name *The Blue Angel* deliberately recalls. There are other places where summary pronouncements on films, characters and directors may be thought

unnecessarily simplistic or distorting. This book's own testimony to the connection between German fantastic films, English "Gothic" traditions, and Hollywood film-making, would seem to invalidate its description of James Whale's work as "coming from nothing and leading to nothing". Nor can I think the total impression of Whale's first *Frankenstein* movie adequately described by the phrase "ruthlessly funny".

These are matters of opinion and interpretation; but there are also, inevitably, some errors to be corrected. German titles and names should be rescrutinized and forms like *Der Lauffer von Marathon*, "Heleue Wiegell" (three times!) and "Frank Theiss" replaced by "Lauter", "Weigel" and "Thiess". Telling us twice, as this book does, that William Dieterle was "Murnau's Faust" does not make it so; Faust was played by Gösta Ekman, while Dieterle, later famous for his Muni biopics, played the comparatively minor part of Gretchen's brother Valentin. And it is surely misleading to say that Max Reinhardt went to the East Coast to direct "a new play by Thornton Wilder, *The Merchant of Yonkers*" without at least mentioning the reason why Reinhardt was thought the ideal director: the fact that this "new" play was based on a Venetian original by Johann Nestroy.

It would be churlish as well as wearisome to multiply such complaints. True, *Strangers in Paradise* casts its net so wide that superficialities and errors become much more likely than they are in a monograph as thoroughly researched and thought through as that of Lyon. But the book has mapped its territory well; it has placed a large number of writers, composers and film-makers in significant context; it has shown the Germanic roots of American film noir; and it points the way to further studies which will augment, enrich, deepen and - on occasions - correct what it so usefully and amusingly tells us.

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BARRY V. QUALLS

The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The novel as book of life
217pp. Cambridge University Press.
£19.50 (paperback, £6.95).
0 521 24408 9

The religious beliefs of the major Victorian novelists have on the whole, received a bad press. When George Eliot's Dinah Morris left preaching on the village green to marry Adam Bede, the *British Quarterly Review* found it "inexpressibly disappointing" that such a good Methodist should become a "beer-chomping, foot-sucking housewife". Dickens's rum-and-pineapple Stiggins, his oily Chadband, not surprisingly led evangelical scribes to complain that he knew "as much of the ways and manners of religious people as a Hottentot!", while the question raised by *Jane Eyre* in the minds of certain Anglicans was whether the author had "any defined notions of religion at all".

Nowadays it is generally accepted that Charlotte Brontë, Dickens and George Eliot were at least believers of some sort. The trouble is of what sort, exactly? To paraphrase Dr Johnson on Milton's religion, we know rather what

they were not, than what they were. They rejected evangelical excess, hypocrisy, Puseyism, missionaries: what did they support? Barry Qualls's fruitful and provocative "reading" of selected works by these three authors suggests that they all, in their own distinctive but related ways, sought to redefine the English Puritan tradition, creating "secular scriptures" which were intended to school their readers' hearts into a recognition of the spiritual life which yet might be understood to bleed mankind together. Qualls identifies Carlyle as the seminal figure in the process whereby the Victorians transformed their inheritance, invoking the Romantic doctrine of "natural supernaturalism" to ratify their urge to find a spiritual meaning in a material world. According to Qualls, the major novelists (defined to exclude Thackeray and Trollope, which limits the discussion somewhat) were determined to write "biblical romances" in which hero or heroine searched for meaning and security; a search inevitably defined in terms of "the types, analogues, and allegorical suggestions of the popular religious tradition".

The focus of the argument is language. The Victorian novelists' attempts to spiritualize the world were expressed in a language rooted in the Bible, and Bunyan. Indeed, their characteristic procedure, according to

Qualls, was to "emblemize" reality, drawing on the old tradition of Francis Quarles's little allegorical devices to focus this preoccupation. The mirror, the prison, the dunghill, the labyrinth, the rescue of the shipwrecked pilgrim: the spiritual issues implicit in these traditional figures are reactualized by their continued deployment in novels such as *Jane Eyre*, *Dombey and Son*, *Silas Marner* or *Daniel Deronda*. Thus the "great looking-glass" Jane Eyre remembers from her incarceration in the Reeds' red room early on in her history alerts us to the scene's significance: suggesting the possibility of being trapped in vain self-regard, but also, in the words of one of Qualls's "vanity-mirror emblem quotations", suggesting that "the best looking-glass, wherein to see thy God, is perfectly to see thyself". The Romantic thrust towards self-fulfilment in Charlotte Brontë's heroine is always tempered by a Christian sense of the dangers of the unfettered imagination: as she remarks to Rochester when she refuses his bigamous proposal, he should "trust in God and yourself".

And yet the balance between secular and spiritual demands which seems to be implied by such a remark is contradicted by the *human* insistence, the insistence upon human aid and communion which Brontë considers "finally, essential" to salvation. Qualls

admits this, but wishes, like his chosen novelists, to have it both ways - to suggest the possibility of transcendence while in practice not obliging the reader to believe in it. Victorian novelists' attempts to spiritualize the world were expressed in a language increasingly secular in reference, for all that it seems so often to draw upon a religious inheritance. Religion is more than a matter of metaphor, and there is a limit to how much a typological reading can prove when applied to works so obviously of this world, worldly.

This is not to deny that, as Qualls points out, there existed a pervasive pattern in nineteenth-century fiction according to which the central character must write his or her own "book of life" (sometimes literally, as in autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical narratives), searching for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that faded not away. But this inheritance tends not to be laid up in heaven; rather, it is to be found in the heart - even, at times, in the bank. The dilemma is most interestingly exposed in *Bleak House*, to which Qualls devotes much space. Esther Summerson's autobiographical narrative reveals a progress from that earthly passage which rejects her to a successful family life she attributes to that "Father who had not forgotten me". Her quest, however, like that of

the more robust Jane Eyre before her, also involves a Romantic search for authentic selfhood, defined in terms of innocence and the sanctity of "natural" feelings. But if she senses everything in her life operating through the *overtone* of Dickens's adds, through the voice of his impersonal narrator, a corrosive, doom-laden prose which sees so much more than cause for God's vengeance. Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot are more hopeful, it is less reliant on God; but it is in Dickens the contradictions are most blatant; the pilgrimage most obvious, and most obviously futile.

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English Rogues (c.1700-1710). Figures by an unknown painter, brown ink, 293 by 434 mm. Estimate: £150-250.



Thomas Stothard, *Scene at the Cross*, pen and grey ink with watercolour, 15 by 23 cm. Estimate: £1,000-1,500.

is uneasy with satire: on suber reflection, it sometimes seems unfair.

It is odd, then, to note that he almost puts his finger on Betjeman's most important technique: "Part of the pleasure - though it is a very secondary one - must derive from the reader's awareness of the strangeness of the enterprise," he writes of *Summoned by Bells*. "It gives one something of a frisson to have the feeble world of Oxford in the twenties described in a form which the Victorians reserved for ponderous and moralising epics." This presentation of the modern world in the forms of a traditional poetic technique is, of course, the hallmark of all Betjeman's writing. It is indeed, all the same, Taylor-Martin finds it "secondary" and *Summoned by Bells*, Betjeman's serio-comic masterpiece, is given the thumbs down. Taylor-Martin is all thumbs. Far him, Betjeman's long poem "falls short of his august models". As, it is necessary to add, Betjeman intended.

When, in 1849, Arnold whinged to Clough that the age was "not unprofound, not ungracious, not unmoving - but unpoetical", Clough's belated reply came in 1858 with *Amours de Voyage*. There, Clough took the classical hexameter and bent it to his own, utterly modern, mock-epic purpose: "Am I prepared to lay down my life for the British female?" Betjeman uses the blank verse of his illustrious predecessors to the same end in *Summoned by Bells*. So it is absurdly beside the point to complain that the poem displays witlessness or lapses into banality. When Frank Kermode considers "Deeply I loved thee, 31 West Hill!" and concludes that this "would not be a tolerable line in a local newspaper poet", Taylor-Martin finds a simple negative judgment. But Kermode fully appreciates what he happily calls Betjeman's "comic astigmatism" - the play of tone and the role of parody in Betjeman's work. When Betjeman writes:

Come, Hygiene, goddess of the growing boy,

I here salute thee in Sanatogen! Kermode can presumably hear the subversive reminiscence of, say, Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty".

Strenuous Daughter of the Voice of God! O Duty! if that name thou love...

Betjeman is plainly disowning the oracular mode and saying: he knows he isn't the type and that life, to be honest, just isn't like that. His verse autobiography is nearer Joyce's *Bloom* than Homer's *Ulysses*.

I see the asphalt slope and smell again The sluggish, sour, inadequate lotus. The joy of *Summoned by Bells* is that, for all its camp poetesse, it escapes Poetry all together.

Tous. If you added them, of buttered toast Had she said I consumed through all the days.

Once jettisoned, the blank verse line and its expectations create the rich literary comedy of "Housen slippers, sponge-bags, pyjamas. Common Prayer" - not to mention the Frostian vividness of "Salt and hot sun on rubber water-wings". It is useless to approach poetry like this in the Amoldian spirit of high seriousness. Betjeman is not interested in the noble application of ideas to life. He is interested in the thing itself - life - and he succeeds marvellously, without recourse to the Grand Style. "And now if you will find my spectacles" - what a blank verse line. What flat-footed brio.

No use frowning the brow; get out the handkerchief and dab your eyes. "You can scarcely understand Betjeman's poetry until you have grasped that he writes 'badly' in order to write well. It is a brilliant device and one which has disoriented his critics. In essence, Betjeman employs a foitly dated, antique style. Timeliness Classical by Golden Treasury and spikes it with ephemeral, detail,

knowing that nothing dates like timelessness and that nothing lasts like dress. By and large, Betjeman's lines break every modernist rule. They might have been written, in the spirit of contradiction, with Ezra Pound's "A Few Don'ts by An Imagiste" propped open at his elbow. It is futile, however, to set up a conflict between Betjeman and modernism, as Alvarez and Wain do, and as Betjeman's greatest admirer, Larkin, seems to do. It is possible to admire Eliot and Betjeman - but only if you can see that Pound's amenably sound rules have been broken by an exceptional poet.

If one reads Betjeman solemnly, the ironic play between, for instance, "Summoned by Bells" and the rest of the line in "May-Day Song for North Oxford" will be baffling. "And a constant sound of flushing runneth from windows where / The toothbrush too is airing in this new North Oxford air." This is funny, as much of Betjeman is in a way that does not preclude authenticity. The "poetic" is emphasized to accommodate and throw into relief the unpoetic. Or consider "Old Friends", which begins with Betjeman taking down a bolt of Laura Ashley and measuring off a foot or two:

And over the west is glowing a mackerel sky

Whose opal fleece has faded to purple pink.

Soon this standard stuff, a kind of poetic comforter, is replaced:

Where is Anne Chancel who loved this place the best,

With her tense blue eyes and her shopping bag falling apart.

And her racy gossip and nineteen-twenty zest.

And that warmth of heart?

The technique is precisely that used by Dr Johnson in his "On the Death of Dr Robert Levett", where he modulates from average elegiac ("Well tried through many a varying year, / See LEVET to the grave descend") to accurate observation:

Yst still he fills affection's eye, Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind...

Coarsely kind. Tense blue eyes. We have before us not the recipient of an elegy but a real person. The method is unorthodox, but it works. Modernist poetic decorum is flouted and replaced, then the replacement is flouted in its turn. Betjeman is a great poetic southpaw.

When Ian Hamilton reviewed *The Best of Betjeman* in 1978, he noted, comparing Larkin with Betjeman, that: "The principal difference between the two poets is that where Larkin uses metre and rhyme as a means of strengthening and elevating ordinary speech, Betjeman more often than not appears to be the creature of his metrical correctness." Accordingly, Hamilton offered to rewrite a few bits of Betjeman to eliminate inversions:

"the proposition is merely that many rich, heartfelt, beautifully observed moments in his poetry get unnecessarily jaunted by his unconscious with the tight forms he's committed to." Though Hamilton is clearly sympathetic and finally rejects his own editorializing, one can detect in his reservations a commitment to poetic decorum - the sense that no place in "real" poetry. We are, in short, back with John Wain. Or, to give him a rest, with Thom Gunn, who reviewed the *Collected Poems* in the *Yale Review* for June 1959 - on essay he has (rightly) chosen not to reprint in *The Occasions of Poetry*.

Gunn was (rightly) puzzled by Lord Birkenhead's prefatory assertion that Betjeman is not "a 'funny' poet". Gunn patiently noted the humour in the poetry, adding: "but Mr Betjeman wants something more; he wants to be beautiful as well as humorous, as, for example, in the following stanza":

When shall I see the Thames again? The prom-prompted gems again, As beily ATS

Without their hats Come shooting through the bridge? And 'cheerful' and 'cheer-by' Across the waste of waters die And low the mist of evening lie And lightly skims the ridge.

"The reference to the ATS", Gunn continues, "is quite amusing, though far from original, but it is at complete variance to the previous two stanzas, to the 'poetic' reference to gems of light in the water, and to the equally serious lines that follow. The mixture makes me uneasy. I know that funny-looking people are to be seen in beautiful scenes, but Mr Betjeman has merely noted the discrepancy (with a shudder of repugnance) and the fact itself is not particularly interesting." Where Ian Hamilton might find justness in the "beily ATS", Gunn discovers a "shudder of repugnance". Surely both are mistaken? Betjeman has a more elastic sense of beauty and joy than either - one which includes the low mist of evening and the ATS, evocatively free of their regulation headgear. Decorum must be bed down with the truth of Betjeman's emotional response.

The problem is both modernist and perennial: Wordsworth faced it when he wished to write about an idiot boy, Eliot when he wrote of 'cigarettes in corridors' and cocktail smells in the bars.

The anonymous TLS reviewer commented only: "the fact that these things occurred to the mind of Mr Eliot is surely of the very smallest importance to any one - even to himself. They certainly have no relation to 'poetry', and we only give an example because some of the pieces, he states, have appeared in a periodical which claims that word as its title."

Of "The Idiot Boy", Coleridge complained: "the author has not, in the poem itself, taken sufficient care to preclude from the reader's fancy the disgusting images of ordinary morbid idiosyncrasy, which yet it was by no means his intention to represent." Baudelaire, in his review of the *Salon* of 1845, encapsulated the problem: "We are painting, the true painter for whom we

are looking, will be he who can snatch its epic quality from the life of today and can make us see and understand, with brush or with penell, how great and poetic we are in our erswats and patent-leather boots." The epic, on the whole, is not Betjeman's aim. A more modest truth will do, but modern life is what he sets out to capture:

Miles of pram in the wind and Pam in the gorse track,

Coco-nut smell of the broom, and a packet of Weights

Press'd in the sand...

That packet of Player's Weights stands for much that is conventionally unpoetic in Betjeman's work: "The Lynam's cess-pool like a body blow"; "Lock'd is the Elsan in its brick shutout"; "Last... last... last-stained Vogues"; "Do six balls make an over? Help me, God!"; "Striving on to prunes and suet"; "Fleas round the tamarisk, an early cigarette"; "Home and Colonial, Star, International"; "Oh, Fuller's angel-cake, Robertson's marmalade"; "And Heinz's ketchup on the tablecloth". So much that is personal, universal and true finds its way into Betjeman's poetry - which is At Home to everything.

And how is it done? Take "Parliament Hill Fields":

Up the hill where stucco houses in Virginia Creeper droop

And my childish wave of pity, seeing children carrying down

Sheaves of drooping dandelions to the courts of Kentish Town.

Everyone has seen something similar, just as we've seen the "ginger-beery surf", or "one child [who] still zig-zags homewards up the lane" - but Betjeman makes poetry of it by evaluating his pity as "childish", by specifying the flowers and by playing on the romantic Golden Treasury associations of "courts", while insisting on the ironic urban reality.

Auden and Larkin recognize in Betjeman's poetry a vision of England which they share. In "Margate, 1940", Betjeman ponders what "we are fighting for". His answer is one that the

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Larkin of "Show Saturday" might have provided:

Oh! then what a pleasure to see the ground With tables for two laid as tables for four, And bottles of sauce and ketchup and squash.

Awaiting their owners who'd gone to a squash.

Betjeman may not like this world of Wilfred Pickles' *Have-a-Go*, any more than Larkin likes the "cut-price crowd", but both love it. As Auden did, even in America, where he wrote in *The Age of Anxiety* at "country curates in cold bedrooms". In 1947, introducing *Sick but not Streamlined*, a selection from Betjeman, Auden professed to believe that Betjeman had been taken over by the spirit of his favourite Aunt Daisy: "How else could he have entered so intimately into my childhood? How else could he be so at home with the provincial gash tones, the seaside lodgings, the bicycles, the harmonium, above all, the atmosphere of ritualistic controversy? And, one might add, so at home with Auden's sense of quotidian evil, as we find it in Betjeman's

The milkman on the road stood staring. The playground nettles nodded 'Now begin'.

And Evil waited, quivering, for him.

As for the seaside lodgings, of course: "Ten minutes from the shore, / Still unprepared to make a picnic lunch! Except by notice on the previous day."

A quotation from boarding-house regulations and a quotation from every English poet travels well, or if, as suspect, that wonderfully clear stuff arrives in New York looking muddy and tasting strange. After all, what are Americans to make of a writer who, in his essay "Topographical Verse", had this to say about Hardy's poem "At the Draper's"? "We all know that sad little Satire of Circumstance about the wife ordering mourning before her husband was dead. But it is the atmosphere created by Hardy which makes the poem memorable for me. 'At the Draper's'. What a title! I can see the shop he stood at the back of - called Cavendish House, smell of calico, wires going to a cash desk with corks whizzing among the incandescent lights and the Congressional minister's wife being served at the next counter." Brilliant, but not for export.

As a thirteen-year-old attending an obscure Northern public school, my first encounter with poetry was "Subaltern's Love Song". It meant less than nothing to me. The "Howt Counties might have been another Country. So this was poetry, I thought - being beaten at tennis by a girl, turned up the collar of my gaudy tie and headed for the nearest coffee bar. However, I never forgot Miss Joan Hunter Dunn. It takes time to grow up to Betjeman. America may manage it yet. But there's probably no hope for Alvarez. Was there ever?

Three Studies of a Man reading a Newspaper, a block chalk drawing by Adolf Friedrich Erdmann von Menzel, 1891, to be offered in Christie's sale of Continental drawings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of 8 King Street, St James's, London SW1, on March 17.

Replay of a revival

Isabel Colegate

WILLIAM LOWNDEN

The Theatre Royal at Bath

91pp. Bristol: Redcliffe Press. £5.95. 0 905459 49 0

The Theatre Royal at Bath reopened last November with a National Theatre production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The same play was given on an earlier reopening, in March 1863, when the theatre had been rebuilt after a fire had destroyed the interior. On that occasion the producer was Charles Kean, the play was preceded by as many as nine dramatic prologues as well as the overture to *William Tell* and followed by a "new and loughable farce" called *Marriage At Any Price*. Theatrical tastes have varied over the two and a half centuries since the first theatre was opened in Bath in 1705, and William Lowndes's book shows how both kept pace with fashion. The great days of Mrs Siddons's first triumphs were followed by the early nineteenth-century passion for juveniles, when the fifteen-year-old Mister William Baty attracted

hysterical crowds; by the popular performances of Mrs Dorothy Jordan, who bore ten children to the Duke of Clarence before he became William IV and was said by Hazlitt to be "the child of nature, whose voice was a coroll to the heart"; and by Macready, Edmund Kean and the famous clown Joseph Grimaldi, who appeared in *Mother Goose* in 1815.

By the mid-nineteenth century theatre in Britain generally was at a low ebb, and Bath itself had ceased to be fashionable. A series of managers failed to halt the decline, and the fire in 1862 seemed the final blow; but a limited company was formed, the money was raised with the help of local committees, and the theatre reopened less than a year after the fire. The restoration retained the essentially Georgian character of the original building, using the walls that remained, including the fine George Dance facade on the Beaufort Square side. At that 1863 performance Titiola was played by this sixteen-year-old Ellen Terry. She performed in Bath on several subsequent occasions, as did Irving, Sarah Bernhardt, Pavlova and Mrs Patrick Campbell; but then decline set in once more and for many

years it seemed only to be possible to make ends meet on the strength of the yearly pantomime.

In 1979 a new effort to revive the Theatre Royal's fortunes began. Two non-profit-making Trusts were set up, one to secure the building programme and to deal with the long-term financing of the theatre, and one to administer it. The National Theatre agreed to make Bath a provincial base for some of its mid-range productions. The theatre reopened on the promised date, the interior rebuilding is now complete and the exterior work, including the restoration of the Dance facade, well under way; bookings are reported to be good. All seems set fair, though the appeal for funds is still £400,000 short of the target and it remains to be seen whether Bath audiences will re-establish the claim made when the plans for the new Orchard Square theatre were announced in 1947. But it was said then, was a "Place, during its Seasons, honoured with so great a number of Persons, eminent by Politeness, Judgement and Taste, and where might readily be expected (next to London) the best Theatre in England".

navar felt antirely happy about their ill-conditioned, disaffected and highly peculiar cousins - "the Lancaster Gate Strachey" - who cordially returned their suspicions.

"The younger members of our family" (wrote James Strachey, meaning presumably his brother Lytton, a sister or two and himself) "apply the term 'Spectatorial' to any particularly pompous and respectable pronouncement." A faint but perceptible "Spectatorial" aura still clings in these pages even to the tearaway, John Strachey, whose conversion to communism in the 1930s ruined his chances of inheriting his father's editorial seat, but who none the less seemed to his sister to be following thoroughly respectable precedents, talking "like a young St Paul" and heading for "a career".

Russell Hoban

Follows his 'masterpiece' (*Observer*), *Riddley Walker*, with a novel of genius PILGERMANN - set at the time of the First Crusade in A.D. 1096. 0 224 02072 2 £7.95

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The best of his writings over two decades, illustrated with 25 of his own drawings. 0 224 02944 4 £9.95 March 24.

Jonathan Cape

commentary

Nuclear devices

Ronald Hayman

JOHN RETALLACK
Berlin, Berlin
Donmar Warehouse

Jehn Retallack should either have drunk deeper or tasted not the Pierian spring of *The Man without Qualities*. Robert Musil is not given credit in the programme of *Berlin, Berlin*, though he is mentioned in the history of the Actors' Touring Company in small print on the back page. Names, themes and ideas have been transposed to contemporary Berlin from Musil's simulacrum of the chaotic Austro-Hungarian Empire in its last years. This is not a bad idea, and Retallack has a strong feeling for the way that the manic ingredients of personality quickly become overthrown in Berlin, but he writes less skilfully and less carefully than he directs. He must know that there are no national daily papers in Germany, and he should have guessed - if he did not know - that what is today called Adenauerplatz did not acquire the name until Adenauer had proved he was not immortal. In *Berlin, Berlin* the counterpart to Musil's Agathe, the sister who appears not to be wholly averse to the idea of incest, is a girl called Anna, who tells us that she has just arrived from East Berlin, where she has been living. But her blouse, her make-up and her coiffure contradict her.

These are small points, but generally the script, the lyrics and the acting are not good enough to convey the main point Retallack is trying to take over from Musil. Even to his early novel *Young Werther* the hero sometimes 'sees with the eyes of reason' but often he is aware of an obscure, almost autonomous life in his mind, something he cannot 'measure out with thoughts'. In *Berlin, Berlin* the central character, Ulrich, gives up his job, not in order to feel (as Musil's Ulrich feels) 'like a stride that could be taken in any direction', but in order to close or at least narrow the gap between public events and private life. He spends his time reading 'all the national dailies', and, as the story develops, it becomes hard for him to see with the eyes of reason. But it is difficult for the author-director to find theatrical correlative for what it is that Ulrich cannot measure out with thoughts. An argument about nuclear disarmament climaxes in his shooting at the other characters with a

imaginary machine-gun. After he has messed up his chances of coaxing his attractive sister to abandon her economics-lecturer husband and her lover in favour of an incestuous ménage à deux, the final sequence shows Ulrich threatening to explode a nuclear device in Berlin, and the closing tableau centres on the inadequate actor's face, frozen into an open-mouthed grimace, expressive of dementia.

Nevertheless, Jehn Retallack is a talent to be reckoned with. He can insinuate meaning into silence and he is ingenious in his exploitation of a simple scenic device consisting of Venetian blinds in screen-sized metal frames. Another sign of talent is the extraordinary width of the gaps between the best moments of the production and the worst. An argument in a café comes excitingly to life when Dr Kertner, a Berlin-born American, representative of an opulent foundation, first refuses to sign an anti-nuclear petition and then, having provoked a girl into hysteria, agrees. In another good sequence, the murderer Moosebrugger watches through a peep-hole while a stripper undulates at him provocatively. The extra 'e' in the middle of the name is a tiny but tireless example of the endemic carelessness.

By far the best performance comes from Chris Barnes as the murderer. He is forceful, sullen, convincing and always eminently watchable. Asking to be arrested, he thrusts out his wrists as if every citizen of Berlin can be expected to carry around a pair of handcuffs. But in loading Moosebrugger with contemporary relevance, Retallack has trivialized Musil's conception. 'If mankind could dream collectively,' Musil wrote in the novel, 'it would dream Moosebrugger.' His Moosebrugger, a rapist-murderer, plausibly comes to play an important role in the fantasies of sophisticated, intelligent and fashionable characters who have never met him. Retallack's Moosebrugger is a less resonant figure who kills in a one-man campaign to eliminate filth from the city.

Some of the points emerge quite subtly, as when Mia (Valerie Braddell) reveals with little more than a smile that her sexual interest in the visiting American is motivated primarily by hopes of manipulating him into directing dollars towards a clinic for immigrant workers. For a small company with small resources, the enterprise is extremely ambitious, and instead of collapsing into a disaster, the show provides an interesting evening.

The wilder shores of philately

Harold Hobson

MICHAEL WILCOX

Lent
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

The action of Michael Wilcox's *Lent* all takes place inside a school, and we are more or less officially told that the story is about a boy struggling successfully to defeat the lethal stupidity of his elders who are too old to learn better. If that really is the story, then Wilcox has told crookedly what is not worth telling at all. It is a story that has been repeated over and over again in the theatre and out of it, over since Rupert Brooke undertook to make a better world by turning his Cambridge mentors into active Socialists. Seventy years later a theatre audience feels that it has a right to something new than what was already *viewed* in 1914. Happily, Wilcox does have something new: Mrs Blake, the owner of the school, and by far the oldest character in the play, is, in enterprise, quickness and devastation of action, way ahead of anybody else on the stage. Patience Collier plays Mrs Blake as a charming, witty, flower-loving old lady of great charm, lethal, but with sound good sense and absolute ruthlessness. It is no wonder that she is introduced to the strains of Handel's 'Arrival of the

Queen of Sheba', for she is rich and mentally gorgeous.

Her grandson Paul Blake (Jonathan Kent) is neither though one day he will become the school's owner, when-will he betide the tyrannical headmaster, Mr Edwards (Dennis Edwards) and his would-be murderous wife (Jean Andersen), and also, I should imagine, the school itself. Paul may have ideas about social reform but he has no brains. He slouches with his hands in his pockets; he gives little screams and jerks of ecstasy; he is increasingly curious about what goes on in talks about sex; he reads books much too young for him; and the speed and dexterity of his animal-like movements are an acute embarrassment. Yet they are the very heart of the play, as Mr Wilcox reveals with stunning skill when Paul is found upon the stage to the sound of Handel's *Water Music*. Paul is not truly a boy at all; he is something that has come out of Saki, spiritually a creature of nature, of the waste of Otto, that can be seen through the school window. Mr Edwards, a stupid man though he is, has perceived something of this that Wensley Pithey's kindly master has overlooked. For he has taken away the boy's book of Colonial stamps so that his imagination may not be allowed to wander; but Mrs Blake, with an air of spring-like freshness, mystically sanctifies Paul's affinity with nature by taking him out to admire the crocuses.

Pot Belly's posterity

John Ray

The Cleopatras
BBC TV

It was obvious after the pre-emptive strike of *The Borgias* that the BBC would soon launch a final assault. The battlefield was thoughtfully chosen: first-century Alexandria, home of the ramshackle and horrid dynasty of the Ptolemies. One might have expected a straight march across the terrain, with strategy based on P. M. Fraser's *Ptolemaic Alexandria* or Edwin Bevan's *History*, or possibly Michael Grant's *Cleopatra*; but no. 'Don't tell us about history; get on with the story', says a girlish Cleopatra VII to her tutor, in a preliminary framing scene to one of the episodes.

She may well have a point, but the scriptwriters had chosen to make the difficult for themselves. The first six Ptolemies are interesting. This series begins with the seventh, Thea, which may have been to do an *Admetus* based on characters that nobody had ever heard of. Richard Griffiths as Ptolemy VIII, who will evermore be known by the name of Pot Belly given him here, beaves his way through the first three episodes, amiably playing a pervert and mass-murderer who rescues the occasional line with a kind of 'adenoidal wistfulness' ('I burnt down a school', he says during a riot. 'What's so wrong with that?' chips in a courtier. 'I left the people in it.' And so on.) In comes a scene of child-dismembering, courtesy of Justin, and we are invited to imagine the Jewish population of Alexandria, trading in slaves, slaughtering elephants in the market place. This incident also appears in 3 Maccabees, where the king is Ptolemy IV, but these elephant stories do go the rounds. Ptolemy VIII, the 'Benefactor', probably was awful (a truth not incompatible with the fact that he was a brilliant administrator); J. P. Mahaffy, in his *History* (1898), makes a gentlemanly attempt to whitewash Pot Belly, but the sober Bevan, rewriting the period in the light of the papyri, reminds us that the morality of Alexandria was not that of twentieth-century London or Oxford, or even Duhlin (Mahaffy had been a tutor of Oscar Wilde). So hideous let him be.

There are other redeeming performances: Ian McNeice as Ptolemy X attempts the task of portraying a nonentity without boring

the viewer, and succeeds. But does he really have to do a sand-dance? Berenice IV (Shelagh Macdonald) in a supporting role, captures a combination of torridness and vulnerability which could have made the series interesting. Julius Caesar (Robert Hardy) is brought in to make sure that only soft drinks are served after 10.30, but stays to look like a bemused uncle as the pot is handed round. Cleopatra spends most of her time giggling with her maid-servant, Charmian and Yvonne. The script, failing to be so bad-it-was-good, slips between all the available stools.

For their own persons, it begins all parody. True nadir is reached when Cleopatra, a thousand years out of date even if they had ever existed, Prince Eupator, dressed up like a vignette of the Valley of the Queens, assures us that 'I feel a little odd'. Each episode is the subject of an anatomical *idée fixe* which leaves one wondering what the next week is going to unfold. It is as if *The British in India* showed us Curzon dressed up as Gandhi, with the whole thing shown in ethnic restaurant. Greek art may be out of fashion, but it is worth considering when it comes to the Ptolemies. In reality, the various Macedonian courts looked well enough, with wide-brimmed hats, soldiers' cloaks, coloured according to rank, and high laced boots. The floors may well have been covered with Nilotic mosaics, with the Egyptian influence merely an evocative backdrop. Here, a group of Tanagra figures are Greek women, effies of inexpressible charm. What we see as sub-Ptolemaic jelly babies, somewhat resembling diseased abalones. Several of the rulers are bald, although whether because they take their duties as supreme pontiffs of the native religion seriously, or as satire, comment on generations of incest, is never made clear. Caesar, perversely enough, is doing rather well in the last department.

Quicquid delatit reges plectitur Achivi: when it comes to insane rulers, the Greeks know how to make it. The viewers suffer. The real Ptolemies made the Egyptians suffer, but at least they built the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The Ptolemies, measured by the heliocentric theory, played the revolutionized agriculture, produced a national health service and almost deciphered the problem of the monsoons. But the lot we see could not be more different. What an opportunity has been thrown away in *The Cleopatras*. And yet somehow one will miss them.

A book has been produced to accompany the series, *The Cleopatras* by Philip Mackie (1977), BBC Publications. £1.95 0 363 220 77 4.

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The seasons of the past

Malcolm Rogers

Wenceslaus Hollar: Prints and Drawings
British Museum

The Bohemian artist Wenceslaus Hollar has always and rightly been considered an heroic Englishman. He spent over thirty highly productive years in this country, and the drawings and etchings from this period constitute a uniquely important record of English life in the mid-seventeenth century. Sir Francis Seymour Haden, an accomplished etcher of a later generation, characterized Hollar's work with the phrase 'truth without pretension', adding 'People sometimes say to me, "What is it you see in Hollar?", and I always answer, "Not quite but nearly everything".'

The exhibition of Hollar's work which has recently opened at the British Museum and which continues until May 15 goes a long way to justifying this old-fashioned compliment. It is a happy product of the Anglo-Czech cultural agreement, and has been organized jointly by the British Museum and the National Gallery in Prague. It centres on two groups of twenty-two drawings from his collection, supplemented in London by a large group of prints (in which Hollar's influence is more direct) from the Museum's collection. After its London showing, the exhibition will travel to Prague (where Hollar was born in 1607), and there an equally fine group of prints from the Czech National Gallery will be substituted.

Hollar was born into a prosperous amiable family, but his early life as an artist was far from comfortable. His father, Registrar of the Law Court of Bohemia, evidently frowned on his son's artistic leanings, and the inscription under Hollar's etched self-portrait of 1649 shows that an early frustration still stung in later life: he proudly notes that he was 'bequeathed par son père'.

It was more important for his development that the educated culture of Protestant Bohemia was an early victim of the Thirty Years' War, and for some years from the late 1620s Hollar lived the life of a wandering *émigré* artist. He was in England, Strasbourg and Frankfurt; he travelled the Rhine and settled in Cologne for a year; in 1634 he was in Holland. Everywhere he went he drew, producing the first of the remarkable series of topographical prints which was to continue throughout his life. In apparently unselfconscious compositions such as the 'View of the Four Seasons', artistic effect seems subordinated in the interest of accuracy: there is no hint of baroque rhetoric; the forms are simplified, and light is even, the mood tranquil, and

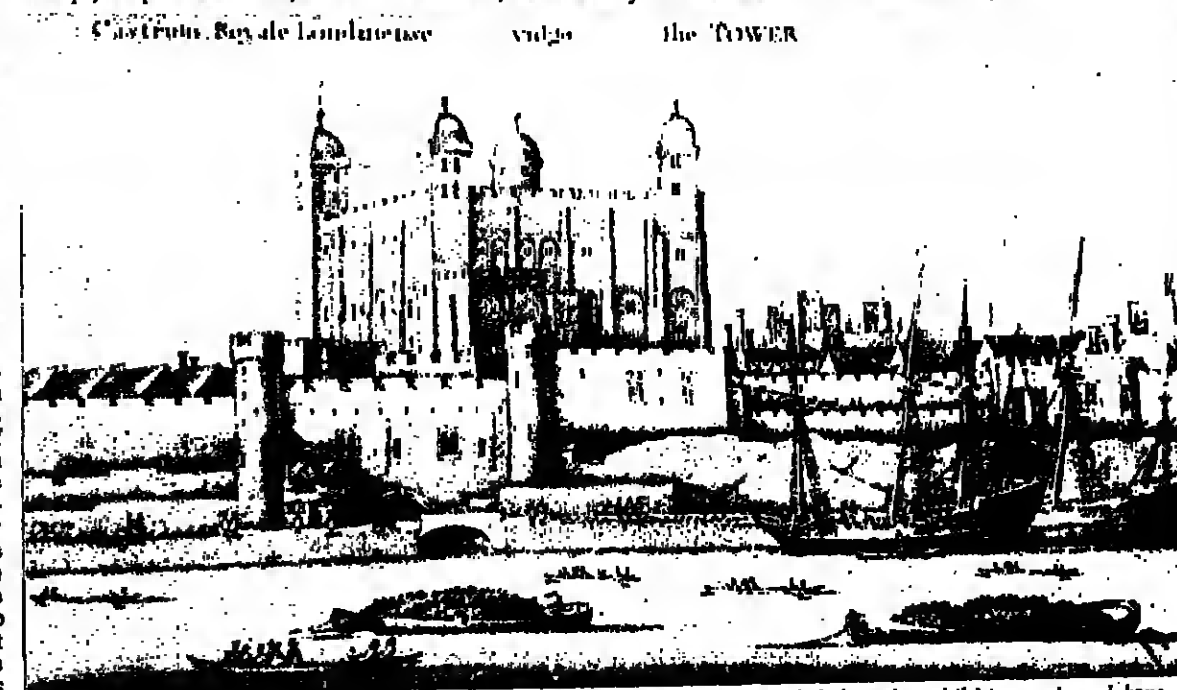
the tiny figures which people the views are not notably expressive; yet the very inconsequential nature of their actions communicates a feeling of the fragility of human life - a mood which pervades much of Hollar's best work.

In Cologne in 1636 his career took a decisive turn, for here Hollar met that legendary patron and collector, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (whose lavish patronage of Van Dyck is currently illustrated at the National Portrait Gallery). Arundel immediately recognized his potential, and brought him to London as part of his artistic impedimenta. Here Hollar was to remain, apart from eight years in Antwerp during the Interregnum, until the end of his life.

In London Hollar worked indefatigably, and the range and sheer quantity of his productions - amply demonstrated in the exhibition - anticipate these of a modern commercial photographer. There are book-illustrations, fashion-plates, contemporary portraits, copies of Old Master paintings and drawings, studies of ships, sculpture and coins, and a host

of views, of which those of London before the Great Fire and of Arundel's idyllic country seat at Albury are the most evocative. At the same time he was producing *rapporages* of contemporary events - the 'Execution of the Earl of Strafford' is the best-known example - and a remarkable series of still-lives which are his most original contribution to print-making in England. They include the exquisite series of insects, shells, and, above all, muffs, all arranged with the utmost assurance on the sheet, and rendered with an attention to texture which is in striking contrast with the stylized rendition of leaves, water and masonry in the topographical prints. The compilers use the word 'fetichisme' in connection with the etchings of muffs (there is also a wonderfully velvety drawing of a muff on display), and certainly fur-lovers should not miss the exhibition, but I prefer to see them as carefully cast off by one of the ladies in a fashion plate, and as a reminder of the evanescence of beauty.

The exhibits have been carefully selected, meticulously if somewhat



'The Tower of London' (1647), one of Wenceslaus Hollar's etchings included in the exhibition reviewed here.

The electric egotist

Peter Kemp

Edmund Kean
Channel 4

Edmund Kean struck his contemporaries as a highly charged phenomenon. Hazlitt, dazzled by his 'bursts of energy', marvelled at the 'electrical shocks' that darted through the audience, illuminating to life lines long embalmed beneath the marmoreal attentiveness of the classical acting tradition. What fed his flickering, fiery performances, it seems, was energy generated by an intense core of egotism. Eager to stand out from the crowd, he took steps to ensure that he did so: no actor was allowed in front of him onstage or - unless beckoned - within ten feet of him off it; supporting roles, Kean felt, were always better pruned.

He'd have been very envious, therefore, of the scope Raymond Fitzsimons's *Edmund Kean* gave to Ben Kingsley. A one-man show, this offered an opportunity - which Kingsley seized triumphantly - for a virtuoso display of versatility. Set in the actor's dressing room, the play interposed reminiscences about Kean's career with extracts from his performances. Roaming with nicely calculated restlessness round property baskets, dangling costumes, towels and greasy paint, Kingsley - eyes blazing, mouth wide, mobility - was vividly convincing as the actor said to have 'stirred a fire in his veins, St. Vitus's dance in his limbs'. Kean's life was

dramatic in more senses than one; and Kingsley revelled intelligently in his bravura extravaganza of it all - the spectacular leap from starvation to stardom, from grunting for turnips in fields to swaggering over guinea-strewn floors. Drunk with applause and tipsy with brandy, he bragged about his theatrical renown and sexual notoriety, his hectic life of plaudits and the clap.

The self-engrossed and self-punishing urgency of Kean's commitment to his 'destiny' - his heroes were Byron and Bonaparte - was conveyed comically, movingly and disturbingly. His acting style was also re-staged. He began, the play pointed out, as a youngster playing imps and monkeys in the Drury Lane pantomimes. Later he became a celebrated Harlequin. Grog through mime routines in lozenge-jacket and black skull cap, Kingsley gave a brisk reminder of what this entailed. And his renderings of Kean performing Shakespeare - the sense pointed up by rapid, telling arm-movements - the 'pantomimic' features Hazlitt noted in the actor - suggested this early training had lasting effects.

Kean finally shed the motley in 1814, when he appeared at Drury Lane as Shylock, a role he played in a black wig and beard instead of the red ones of stage convention. Hazlitt was there to register the advent of something remarkable - 'the first gleam of genius breaking through the gloom of the stage'. And his reviews, with their majestic, excited notation of Kean's tones, gestures and interpretations, have clearly been pillaged productively for this play. Like Hazlitt, Fitzsimons draws attention to Kean's innovation

in the Ghost Scene in *Hamlet* - approaching the spectre of his father, not with his sword held protectively before him, but threateningly behind him to keep Horatio and Marcellus at a distance. Following Hazlitt's belief that 'the highest and most perfect effort' of Kean's art was his performance of Othello's speech, 'Farewell the tranquil mind!', Fitzsimons offered this three times. Kingsley, too, seemed to have taken cues from Hazlitt's observations: his delivery had the 'hoarseness' attributed to Kean, the uneven, fitfully impressive voice of the actor.

Kean's acting, Hazlitt said, was 'not of the patrician order'. It was rather, this play indicated, an attempt to upstage the patrician orders. Emulous resentment of the aristocracy rankled creatively in Kean. Proclaiming himself an illegitimate son of the Duke of Norfolk, he believed, he was continually being done down by an upper-crust conspiracy. Aristocrats - such as those on the governing Drury Lane Committee - crowded in his ambivalent feelings of the snubbed snob. Becoming 'the monarch of the stage' was his solution. Fitzsimons's play drew parallels between the actor's life and art by incorporating extracts from *Richard III* into its account of his scheming and straining towards 'the throne' of leading tragedian at Drury Lane. It might have found an even apter instance of reality fusing with roleplaying. According to Hazlitt, Kean 'never showed more genius' than when - as Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* - he pronounced the stable word 'Lord' with an unbecoming mixture of servility and sarcasm.

Satirical gentleman

David Alexander

Henry William Bunbury (1750-1811)
Gainsborough's House, Sudbury, Suffolk

Thomas Gainsborough's birthplace is a wholly appropriate place for an exhibition devoted to Henry Bunbury. This gentleman artist, who became the best known of amateur draughtsmen in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, came from a family still resident in Suffolk, and Gainsborough himself owned at least one of his drawings. Some sixty of his drawings, most of them heightened with watercolour, have now been borrowed from a variety of sources, including the Royal collection; and Thomas Patch's caricature painting of a group of young Grand Tourists in Rome, which includes the young Bunbury, has been brought from the United States. The catalogue (16pp. £1.25 0 94511 00 4) is prefaced by an excellent essay by John Reilly, whose interest in the artist developed from his work as one of the editors of the Yale edition of the letters of Horace Walpole, one of Bunbury's greatest admirers.

As some of the drawings reveal, Bunbury's ideas were often better than his draughtsmanship, though this has a characteristic awkwardness which was clearly appreciated and was respected by the engravers. Bunbury was not the 'second Hogarth' Walpole imagined him to be; he was, however, responsible during the 1770s and 1780s for designing highly amusing social satires as well as charming decorative prints, the latter often masquerading as literary illustrations. The emphasis of this exhibition is upon his drawings; it is true that he exhibited several at the Academy and that his drawings were prized by those who knew him, but his reputation rested on the prints after these. There are less than twenty of these, and though the catalogue here includes several discussed in the essay, such as the splendid 'A Tour to Foreign Parts' (1777), which shows a young lord about to be fleeced by a French innkeeper. But several of the major Bunbury delights are here, including the six-foot 'Long Minuet as Danced at Bath' (1787), which can be seen as a forerunner of the strip cartoon.

One point upon which our information is understandably meagre is the extent to which Bunbury benefited financially from prints after his drawings. He had, in the words of his son, 'a carelessness about money which did not befit a younger brother'. Perhaps it was financial need which encouraged him to provide a series of Shakespearean illustrations for the print-seller Thomas Macklin; these were engraved in the early 1790s, under the patronage of the Duke of York, to whom Bunbury became a friend of the Bedchamber in 1787. As Walpole had observed in 1780, Bunbury had 'more humour when he invents than when he illustrates'; his young ladies, with their sharp features, pink cheeks and open-eyed innocence, did not transplant altogether successfully from 'furniture' prints, and although designs after Bunbury were still being engraved at the time of his death in 1811, his career had clearly peaked twenty years earlier.

Bunbury is an interesting figure, who had, as Dr. Reilly points out, some influence on professional satirists, but he is not an important one and it is unlikely that there will be another Bunbury exhibition for some years. It is therefore a matter of regret, not only that the exhibition will not be seen elsewhere, but that the catalogue is not fuller. The entries on the eighty-one exhibits are minimal, and do not even explain some of their literary connotations; and there are only seven illustrations; this alone will prevent the catalogue from becoming the modest standard work which Bunbury deserves. (The exhibition continues until April 10, and is closed on Mondays and Good Friday.)

Unendingly hermeneutic

Oliver Taplin

CHARLES SEGAL

Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' *Bacchae*

36pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £26.80 (paperback, £9.70). 0 691 06528 4

One of the bosses of the "post-structuralist mafia" has let it be known that "the reader for his part must lose himself in a hermeneutic infatuation that makes all rules of closure appear arbitrary". Charles Segal complacently does his best to be open, eclectic and infatigable: the resultant hook is shapeless. Perhaps a deconstructionist approach entails a self-conscious fragmentation, a renunciation of argumentative moulding for fear of imposing a definite meaning. This is a new turn for Professor Segal who, though he always writes with facility and profligacy, has usually shown a clear sense of direction.

The first half might be broadly termed "structuralist" and consists mainly of a meandering rhapsody of points. *Bacchae* is a happy hunting ground, especially if you rattle your material up from here, there and everywhere in the play without much regard for sequence or context. There may seem to be some familiarity to the Lévi-Straussian conclusion that "the apert, biological, familial, political and sexual codes are all homologous". But as long ago as 1960 Roland Barthes asserted that tragedy "refuse la médiation, l'entente, le conflit ouvert"; and sure enough there are persistent warring notes of collapsing antitheses, of fluidity, sliding, dissolving and disintegration. In the last quarter of the book the rapidly decomposing jargon of deconstruction is finally wheeled out – gap, trace, absence, supplement, difference, arbitrariness. These are some of the recycled words which are "meant" to convey a crisis of confidence in language and meaning which is claimed to have characterized the last years of the fifth century ac no less than of the twentieth ad.

The two longest and most interesting, and least formulaic, chapters come in between, though I cannot see how they mediate between the structuralist and deconstructionist parts. One is psychological, and it is here that Segal's eclecticism falters. He cannot disguise his reservations about Freud and Lacan, and the auxiliary verb "may" creeps in again and again. "Elevation in the high tree may symbolise the precarious delusion of phallic power." Or it may not? More confidently Segal sees Pentheus' fate as a failed *de passage*, though he remains vague over particulars. He

might like recent speculations about initiation into the Dionysiac mysteries – though that might well be an archaizing return to the earliest themes of tragedy, which would not suit Segal's view of *Bacchae* as a novelty of the *fin-de-siècle* crisis.

The other central chapter is called "Metatragedy", which is defined as "self-conscious reflection by the dramatist on the theatricality and illusion-creating power of his own work". It is presented in a theatre regarded as "the magical space of the anti-world, the carnivalesque, the ludic". With or without this "eclectic" vocabulary, there is surely something to this. *Bacchae* is the only Greek tragedy which handles the costume of disguise on stage, and this kind of "play-acting" contributes to the bizarre of the cat-and-mouse scene when Dionysus escorts Pentheus to the mountain. But Segal's starting point is not of this sort: it is the "fact" that Dionysus is the god of the theatre – in fact, it is said, of tragedy and comedy, of all sorts of illusion, of masking and unmasking, of religious ecstasy, and so forth. But this is use of "of" my more

than a pedagogic over-simplification? Is Dionysus the god of drama because it was performed at his festival? Athletic contests were held at festivals of Zeus and of Apollo and of Poseidon – they are not particular to the god of the festival. Homer was performed at the Panathenaia, but that does not make Athena the god of epic. Despite Nietzsche, it should not be taken for granted that there is anything intrinsically or essentially Dionysian about Greek tragedy.

Apart from this issue (where my views may be eccentric) Segal looks especially to two speculative matters of staging to demonstrate *Bacchae*'s "metatragic deconstruction of its own illusionistic power". He claims that the "palace miracles" were not given any concrete representation and thus draw attention to their own theatrical illusionality. But does this mean that anything entrusted to the audience's imagination is thereby metatheatrical? This criterion would extend to much of earlier tragedy; yet Segal implies, wisely, that *Bacchae*'s melodrama is a special feature of late Euripides. Secondly, he supposes that when

Agave brings on her son's head she is carrying the mask which the actor of Pentheus had worn earlier, and he stresses the possible word-play on *prosopon* ("face"/"mask") at line 1277. This is the line with which Cadmus gently forces his daughter to recognize that she is not carrying an animal's head but her own son's. Segal does not face the way that this, for him the most overtly ludic line, comes at the moment when the tragic grimace of human life and death is reassured over the bizarre tragic-pantomime of some of the earlier scenes, when the short-lived game turns into life-long misery.

Segal does not pay much attention to another more clearly ambiguous mask, that of the Stranger – Dionysus. He smiles. A smiling mask in a tragedy would seem to undermine the whole genre. The unsettling effect of this has been well treated by Helene Foley in a recent article; as she puts it, "the god thus denies us clear access either to the comic laughter or to the tragic pity by which we control our theatrical experience." We should go on to observe how this ambiguous tone gives

way in the final scenes to unadmitted tragic pathos. We mortals are left behind by the smiling god in a world of grief. It is, by the way, unfortunate that because of textual damage we do not know whether Dionysus still wore this mask. This is, indeed, a gap which has left only a trace, but not in the deconstructionist sense.

The stuff of this book seems to have suffered a sort of intellectual *sparagmos*. Scattered throughout are sensitive observations, fine points of language, and thought-provoking ideas. It may be significant that in its eclectic, closure-refusing pages we are given no sense of the overall shape of the *Bacchae* itself. There has been no substantiation for the penultimate sentence of the book: "Euripides has given this play a highly formalized, traditional structure, marked by careful articulation of the plot, striking beauty of language, intricate strength and deliberate orderliness of design." Would that Segal had imparted some of the same qualities to *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*.

MUSIC

Evaluation evaded

Michael Tanner

CHARLES OSBORNE

The World Theatre of Wagner: A Celebration of 150 Years of Wagner Productions

240pp. with illustrations. Oxford: Clarendon. £25. 0 19 48 2258 2

RUDOLF HARTMANN

Richard Strauss: The Staging of his Operas and Ballets

240pp. Oxford: Clarendon. £25. 0 19 48 2254 X

KAREN FORSYTH

Aradne auf Naxos by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss: In Genesis and Meaning

310pp. Oxford University Press. £20. 0 19 85356 0

It seems to be characteristic of writers on opera that they are interested in every aspect of the subject except the significance and worth of the works they discuss. Of course there are so many ways of writing about opera and its phenomena, as *Opera* magazine demonstrates, which are not contradictions with the works themselves, and the majority of opera scholars are little concerned with value, but the incentive to produce books which evade the crucial responsibilities is evident. Of the three under review, two are glosses devoted, as their titles suggest, to productions, and one is a full dissertation, with all the armour-plating that that implies.

To get the worst over first: Charles Osborne's *The World Theatre of Wagner* is an unmitigated disgrace, with attention only because it attracts the lumps to which the subject can be shunted by anybody. It is that Pabst should have published it, presumably in the belief that since this is Wagner-time, there will be buyers for a book which, passed through rapidly, is at least full of photographs. The blurb, and indeed the subtitle – "A Celebration of 150 Years of Wagner Productions" – suggest that it will be a comprehensive survey of what is a thoroughly doctored field. It is no such thing. In the case of the *Ring*, for instance, there are two photographs of the great Wagner production at Bayreuth of 1951-58, and ten of the 1970s, which was of no interest; many of the other photographs are merely close-ups of the leading singers, and it isn't clear to me that anyone is going to be interested by caption which runs "Don Claudio in the role of the ENO production of THE RINGWOLD (sic), a role he undertook when the production went on tour in 1973". Far too high a proportion of the pictures are from manifestly bad productions in what English reviewers invariably refer to as "his own" Royal Opera House or the Glyndebourne, and there are not nearly enough of the real landmarks of Wagnerian production. From what we are shown, there is not much to celebrate.

The text is of a scarcely believable perfection. It is assumed that readers won't know the plots, so they are presented as if they were entries for a *New Statesman* competition to summarize them in telegraphese. Inaccuracies abound, there is no focus of interest, and attempts to cast an individual light are "marvellously" wrong. The word "spiritual" means more to some people than to others. Like so many problems, however, this can be reduced to one of semantics. For "spiritual" one can substitute "unconscious", or, if psychological terms are unacceptable, "aesthetic". For Wagner himself, the terms were interchangeable. Thus the Literature Director of the Arts Council. It is alarming that for a man in such a position problems of semantics should be so easily dealt with, or that he should be "unfettered by the barrenness of his solutions to them".

Osborne's masterpiece of over-qualified fatuity and error is the text which trickles through the illustrations of *Meistersinger* and although

The two books on Richard Strauss are at the very least respectable. Rudolf Hartmann, Strauss's close friend and collaborator, has written the book on him that Osborne should have written on Wagner. Of course his task was easier, since the number of production-styles has been smaller, the period over which they have been produced only half that of Wagner's works; but the operas are more numerous, and many of them are of so little interest that it is a considerable achievement to retain the reader's attention throughout the book. Traditionally, and explicitly, he begins each chapter with an account of the gestation of the work, proceeds to an admirable plot-summary in which key points are highlighted and special difficulties for the producer discussed, then gives an account of the circumstances of the first performance,

When his landlord's dog bit his thumb, the composer seized the excuse to stop work on his score for several weeks; and "Wagner immediately went to Munich and became the close friend of the young homosexual monarch, who was already well advanced towards the insanity in which he was to end his days"; and "Die Meistersinger's premiere was an absolute triumph, the only unfortunate incident occurring when Wagner, who had sat consort-like beside Ludwig in the royal box, outraged the feelings of the good citizens of Munich by stepping forward to acknowledge the applause." Each of these statements is not only false, but knowingly so: one couldn't produce them unless one knew the truth that they distorted. The remainder of the chapter on the work, apart from odds and ends on various productions, is devoted to a strenuous insistence on the harmful effects on it of "the composer's intransigent racial theories", together with a claim to their irrelevance to the significance of *Die Meistersinger*. It isn't easy to imagine a worse book than this.

Given Hartmann's devotion to Strauss, one is prepared for the infrequency of comment on the blatant inadequacies of the operas, even on their own terms. Probably Hartmann was not aware that merely from reading his accounts of the successive works one can feel the onset of sclerosis from *Die Frau ohne Schatten* onwards, and the sense that Strauss was, to put it gently, not writing from any urgent creative impulse. The subjects, with a couple of exceptions, seem to have been picked with increasing randomness. No wonder the sets remain so elaborate: Strauss's operas simply could not survive a reduction to essentials, since most of them have none. Even the enchanting *Capriccio* needs its sumptuous trimmings. Strauss is a composer of beguiling surfaces, and such innovation as there has been in Straussian production has necessarily involved the importing of ever more bizarre gimmicks, as in Joachim Herz's *Die ägyptische Helena*.

Karen Forsyth's book on *Aradne auf Naxos* is a formidable industrious work, of a kind that is more likely to Hartmann's manifestly and explicitly, he begins each chapter with an account of the gestation of the work, proceeds to an admirable plot-summary in which key points are highlighted and special difficulties for the producer discussed, then gives an account of the circumstances of the first performance,

The diva's devotee

Stephen Pickles

GIOVANNI BATTISTA MENEGHINI

My Wife Maria Callas

Translated by Henry Wisneski

311pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.

0 370 305 02 7

It is in a way pitiful that this book should have been written. Maria Callas's husband, however, had had enough of the drive written about his wife. After Arianna Stassinopoulou's *Maria: Beyond the Callas Legend* (an extraordinary exercise in dedication and self-identification) he decided to tell the true story.

Unfortunately for those best able to tell it, the truth is often a very private affair. It is to Giovanni Battista Meneghini the credit that he declined many lucrative offers for his story: Callas is a subject for the best-seller, a fact of which many have taken advantage. No such motive can be ascribed to the octogenarian Meneghini. His undertaking centres on emotional loss, not financial gain. In that way it is a sad volume, and by contrast the vicarious gloss of other Callas books is shown for what it is. But the whole truth can be as embarrassing for the reader as for the teller: one party invades privacy at the reluctant invitation of the other. As Meneghini says: "It seemed to be a betrayal of Maria to make public what we had shared together, what she had confided to me. I lived for Maria, I dedicated a large part of my life to her, and I overstepped loving her. Now it is my duty to defend her memory."

Meneghini's is a love-story. It would be unfair to criticize him for too often sounding like a commodity broker. As a businessman whose trade was bricks, his character may often appear compromised by professional evasions and prosaical values. But despite the lack of glamour in his trade, and his relatively superficial remarks about opera, there is an attractive plainness in his position. His old-fashioned

some critics refer to her "putting up with him". It seems clear that Callas loved him. That above all is what he wishes us to believe.

Meneghini tells the story very simply. This enables him to divide their world into black and white, and so to sustain a sense of himself as her true lover and most significant mentor. "No one discovered Maria Callas. It is all fabrication. Even before bearing her name, she was moved by her story. She was a young girl desperately in need of help, and I offered it without asking for anything in return." This reads like the précis of a sentimental opera's first act, because Meneghini wants us to be as moved as he was. But such simplicity became his great weakness within the drama: for Callas did not long remain the desperate young girl. It is in the nature of what she could achieve onstage that she would develop into a richly complicated character. There can be little doubt that she was seduced away from him; and yet she allowed herself to be, the allure of passion being intensified by her constant enactment of it as an operatic before. It seems lovable that the charming love-notes to Meneghini should turn to angry words and violent exchanges. She could write to him: "If I put everything that I feel for you into words, I will be marvellous." These are remarkable feelings, and likely to have a limited life.

The violence of Callas's character is sufficient warning. A waiter who tries to touch her breasts is attacked with a dish of spaghetti over her father's mistress when she takes exception to her singing. During *Tosca*, when Barreto Plinio replaces her with Tebaldi, she threatens him with a bronze lantern, and knees him in the stomach for attempting to call the police. That the same person should draw up "Prussian guidelines" for the domestic in Milan is no surprise. Two of them are revealing enough: "Absolute cleanliness always. One will never see me with a hair on my

and the composer, in the course of which they debated minute questions of dramaturgy, the nature of the central theme, the degree of seriousness that they should consequently aim at, and all the special difficulties involved in a work in which the comic and the portentous are so intriguingly mixed. Miss Forsyth's diligence is exemplary, the award of a doctorate a foregone conclusion. How many people who aren't being paid to read the book will actually succeed in getting through it is another matter. If a supreme work of art were in question, the necessary tedium would doubtless be felt to be justified. But *Aradne* is, in the end, a superior diversion. The theme of the *Aradne* story – fidelity unto death versus an easy come – easy go attitude – is not explored with any degree of searchingness. And it is widely agreed that from *Bacchus* entry onwards the opera degenerates into a tiresome bawling match. As usual in Strauss, happiness comes in an intolerably protracted dose of C major; the work becomes "Wagnerian", but by no means Wagnerian. So Forsyth gives a detailed account of something which, charming and touching and amusing as most of it is, hardly needs the illumination of scholarship.

None the less, the book is a high-grade specimen of its genre. Once over some initial methodological problems, where she is clearly out of her depth – she writes, for instance, of the "intentional fallacy, that *bête noire* of the genetic method", whereas the intentional fallacy, whatever it may be, is the stock-in-trade of "the genetic method" – she hurries relievedly and welcome on to brass tacks. Cause for anxiety on the reader's part doesn't immediately recede, since she refers a couple of pages later to "the older Mozartian set number opera with its clear division between recitative and aria", while one of Mozart's triumphs is to exploit or ignore that division as he thinks fit. But after that her exposition

of her extremely copious and complex material is admirable, and her writing functional and lucid. The major source – a rather severe one – of annoyance is her inability to decide whether or not her readers should know German. In the body of the text, German quotations of more than four lines are translated – it's not clear that they need to be in German in the first place, quite often – but one is expected, though not consistently, to be able to read three lines without assistance. And none of the very numerous and lengthy footnotes is translated, though they contain much absorbing material. On page 160, for example, having told the reader, perhaps to his surprise, that Hofmannsthal told Carl Burckhardt "that he had never really cared much for Strauss's music" (this is 1929) she adds a footnote in which Burckhardt untranslated reports that when the two of them were known up together for the winter,

Verdi engrossed Hofmannsthal a great deal in those months. He had bought a number of records of the Italian master; when he listened to the aria "Credo in un dio crudele", his expression was impressively stony, mask-like; he let the record play again, and listened with the closest attention, not speaking for a long time. He retired to his room and didn't want to hear any more music.

Such incidental illuminations would have helped the earnest, groping reader on his way.

As it is, it is unlikely that another work on *Aradne* will ever be required. Miss Forsyth's estimate of the work isn't entirely clear, partly because on the last page her anxieties return, as well they might, about the relationship between "the genetic method" and the drawing of evaluative conclusions. It would be said if opera criticism, supposing it gets seriously under way, had to relieve all the traumas of literary criticism in its connotations with scholarship; sad, but not in the least surprising.

asked, and no more of that "Yes, sir", "Yes, ma'am" nonsense."

For all his understanding, Meneghini remains subject to Callas's frequently "uncompromising, intransigent attitude". Her dislike of Visconti's homosexuality overrules Meneghini's admiration for him. "Her aversion was obvious, extreme, and at times almost manic." She said that she did not want him with her, that even his scent and breath annoyed her. Yet she could have been expected to sympathize with Visconti's high ideals, his contempt for vulgarity and for easily won approval. His remarks about her *Violenta* are some of the most telling written about that famous role.

All the *Traviatas* of the future, soon, but not immediately (because human arrogance is a fault eradicated only with difficulty), will contain a little of Maria's *Traviata*. Only a little, in the beginning. Then (when they feel that enough time has passed so as not to run the risk of direct comparison) much. Then all of it.

For the rest, Meneghini writes of Onassis and his gang as one might expect, best evaded in the chapter headings: "How Onassis Robbed Me of My Wife", and "Diary of a Botany". Other singers receive sparse comment, and Callas's detractors are unequivocally dismissed. Meneghini's love-story often reads like an old man's blind infatuation, and his supposition that she committed suicide shows his

constant susceptibility to the lido of her as the "young girl desperately in need of help".

There is a photograph of the La Scala *Traviata* (1953) in the book. It is the second act. Bastianini looks on as Callas turns away in anguish. The eloquence of the picture beggars the written word, as the silent Meneghini must have believed for so long. It is sad that his silence had to be broken.

The Metropolitan Opera Classics Library is a new series, and this week sees the publication of its first volume, which is devoted to *Der Rosenkavalier* (203pp. Little, Brown. £9.95. 0 316 56334 1). It contains a foreword by Anthony A. Bliss, General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, an introduction to the opera by George J. Metcalf, who also contributes a "Reconstruction" of Strauss's relations with Hofmannsthal, a summary of the opera by John Cox, the complete libretto in German, with parallel English translation, the production history of *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Met, with lists of casts and performances, and a colour photographic essay on their current, lavish, production. There are also a bibliography and a discography.

Michael Kennedy's *Strauss*, first published in 1976, has recently been reissued in paperback (274pp. Dent. £3.95. 0 460 02176 1). It is an extensive section of biography and criticism, as well as a calendar, a catalogue of works and a bibliography of Strauss studies.

Glottally chronometric

Stephanie West

RICHARD JANKO

Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic development in epic diction

322pp. Cambridge University Press. £25. 0 521 23869 2

No one seriously concerned with archaic Greek poetry can afford to ignore this book, even if glottochronometry does not sound like everybody's cup of tea. Richard Janko's primary concern is with the origins of the major Homeric hymns, and by close examination of their language he seeks to illuminate the obscurity surrounding the circumstances in which they were composed. It would of course make little sense to consider the hymns without reference to other early Greek hexameter poetry, and this study constantly impinges on some of the most controversial issues in the literary history of archaic Greece; fortunately Dr Janko is well equipped to face the old lions which Gilbert Murray pictured lying in wait for those who

venture far into Homeric territory.

The core of the book lies in the study of diachronic and regional development in the traditional epic diction, based on statistical comparisons of the use of archaic and innovative features in the various works concerned. The value of this method of inquiry was already recognized in the nineteenth century, the most popular subject, for investigation being the observance and neglect of digamma; however, studies of individual phenomena in isolation failed to inspire confidence. More recently others have experimented with several such criteria. But in range, thoroughness, and statistical expertise Janko goes far beyond anything of the sort previously attempted.

He concentrates on ten criteria (though he glances at half a dozen more), from which some clear and interesting results emerge. The *Odyssey* is close to, but always after, the *Iliad*; the same relation holds between the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony*, the Hesiodic pair being linguistically more advanced than the Homeric. The *Hymn to Aphrodite* is close to Homer, while the *Hymn to Demeter* and the *Delian part of the Hymn to Apollo* stand nearer to

Hesiod; the results for the *Shield of Heracles*, the *Hymn to Hermes*, and the *Pythian part of the Hymn to Apollo* are inconsistent. "Linguistically more advanced" does not, of course, as Janko points out, necessarily mean "later"; still, no one doubts that the *Odyssey* and the *Works and Days* are respectively later than the *Iliad* and the *Theogony*, so that some correlation between linguistic development and relative date seems undeniable.

However, we really want to proceed beyond what we already know. Dead reckoning from this linguistic evidence is tricky, in view of the lack of generally recognized landmarks by which we may check our bearings; but Janko does wonders with relative chronology, and occasionally, with due caution, hazards some dates. His argumentation is always stimulating and ingenious, and the reader who has followed patiently through rugged tables of short dative-plurals and assorted genitives presently gains a vantage-point from which it even seems possible to discern some features of the prehistory of the epics.

The agnostic will of course urge the need to take account of many variables. Thus, even if we concede the general principle expressed in Milman

Parry's unprovable assertion that "the language of oral poetry changes as the whole rather faster nor slower than the spoken language", the pattern of linguistic change may, as Janko himself points out, be complicated by deliberate archaization; we also have to reckon with other forms of idiosyncratic variation between poets, as well as with the effects of differences in subject-matter and in geographical environment. We must also remember that these works have not come to us sealed in a time-capsule; it would be unrealistic to assume that they have all suffered equally and consistently from scribal modernization in the course of transmission. But though it is easy to point to possible sources of inaccuracy, it is only fair to add that the author has usually seen them himself, and he does not make exaggerated claims for the precision of linguistic change as a chronometer.

We cannot expect to be shown short cuts in this area:

On a huge hill
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he
Reach her, about must, and about must go.
Dr Janko has explored a difficult and interesting route, and deserves the thanks of other travellers.

Many of the themes studied in the book are not distinctive of archaic Athens and the fifth century. Homer in particular has interesting material. He is particularly one-sided by Janko, on the grounds that *pelio's* favoured home is a place of democracy; and it is certainly true that Odysseus is commended for giving the popular orator Theoclymenus, and persuading him. But there are counter-arguments for persuasion other than that of democratic assembly, and the history of Greek literature with debate, and public interaction between individuals with decisions and the factors that determine them from Homer's Nestor to the *New Statesman* competition to summarize them in telegraphese. Inaccuracies abound, there is no focus of interest, and attempts to cast an individual light are "marvellously" wrong. The word "spiritual" means more to some people than to others. Like so many problems, however, this can be reduced to one of semantics. For "spiritual" one can substitute "unconscious", or, if psychological terms are unacceptable, "aesthetic". For Wagner himself, the terms were interchangeable. Thus the Literature Director of the Arts Council. It is alarming that for a man in such a position problems of semantics should be so easily dealt with, or that he should be "unfettered by the barrenness of his solutions to them".

Osborne's masterpiece of over-qualified fatuity and error is the text which trickles through the illustrations of *Meistersinger* and although

Terms for disagreeing on

Jeremy Waldron

ROGER SCRUTON

A Dictionary of Political Thought
499pp. Macmillan. £12.
0 333 33439 6

"The Light of humane minds", said Thomas Hobbes, "is Perspicuous Words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity. Metaphors, and senseless and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them, is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt." It was his awareness of the violence of words and of the possibility that a mere philosopher could "fright men from obeying the Laws of their Country with empty names" that led Hobbes to propose a radically new science of politics. If only political science could be built up as a system of clear and unequivocal definitions, modelled on the structure of his beloved Euclid, then a reader could no more deny the necessity of absolute government, given Hobbes's axioms of human nature, than he could deny, given definitions of point, line and angle, the theorem of Pythagoras. Rigorous argument based on exact definition – that was the Hobbesian remedy for social and political disorder.

It is a mark perhaps of Hobbes's failure in this enterprise, and a tribute certainly to the continuity of Western political thought, that the very problems of definition he was determined to resolve in 1651 remain focal points of theoretical dispute in political studies today. *Justice*, *democracy*, *law*, *freedom*, *rights*, *power*, *authority* and *sovereignty*: we simply do not have generally accepted definitions for any of these cardinal terms. We know what they mean of course, or rather we know how to use

them: aggressively and tendentiously, as slogans for campaigns and rallying-cry for factions. But the possibility of basing a theory of politics on exact and agreed definitions of these concepts is as remote now as ever. Why are we in this position? Why is definitional agreement in politics so difficult to secure? Is it simply bad behaviour – a refusal in the universities and among political thinkers generally to recognize our responsibility to the world as it is? Or does the persistence of these difficulties tell us something deeper and more important about the nature of political thought?

We can trace to Hobbes not only the demand for clarity but also the beginnings of an explanation of why that demand was unlikely to be satisfied. Hobbes was among the first to distinguish clearly between what we would now call the emotive and the descriptive meaning of a term, and to recognize the importance of this distinction for a pathology of political science. Take, for example, the concepts of *monarchy* and *tyranny*. According to the traditional Aristotelian view, these concepts denote quite different forms of political organization, with different natures, different merits and, most importantly, different prognoses. But Hobbes points out that, as these terms are commonly used, their descriptive meaning is exactly the same: they both denote the government of many by one man, usually a king. What differs is the emotive meaning: "Tyranny is the name that Monarchy is called by men that like it not." Since man is affected in different ways by the same phenomena, there is bound to be an inbuilt "inconstancy" in the way that emotively loaded language is used. "For one man calleth *Wisdom*, what another calleth *foresight*; and one cruelly, what another *justice*. And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratification."

The diagnosis has remained a popular one. In the middle of this century, when the emotive theory of ethics was much in vogue, a lot of attention was paid to what happens when the emotive and the descriptive meaning of a concept begin to come apart. In 1938, the American philosopher Charles Stevenson introduced the idea of a *persuasive definition*: the process whereby a familiar word is given a new descriptive meaning while its old emotive meaning remains substantially unchanged. Thus, for instance, someone may try and define "freedom" as "the recognition of social duty"; because if only the good emotive vibrations that surround the word "freedom" can be associated psychologically with the concept of duty, we might be able to persuade people to accept more willingly the rigours of communal life. Or, in a similar sort of way, "democracy" may be redefined as "submission to the will of the Party" – again in an endeavour to redirect people's interests and allegiance, by associating the favourable emotive overtones of "democracy" with the not immediately attractive concept of party domination. This pattern of analysis exercised considerable influence in the 1940s and 1950s. It seemed to explain the operation of propaganda and advertising, and it afforded the philosopher a congenial cynical view of what was going on in political debate.

In the late 1950s, however, a new account of the "inconstancy" of political terminology began to emerge. An important paper by W. B. Gallie (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1956-7) introduced us to the idea of "essentially contested concepts" – the idea that there may be, in ethics and politics, "concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses". In other words, there may be concepts whose essence it is to be disputed, concepts whose meaning has not been correctly understood if it is not realized that he is engaging immediately in a contest as to its meaning. If Gallie's view is correct, then it is a naive mistake to call for agreed definitions of these concepts. We may justly demand that each rival conception of contested concepts should be defined as clearly as possible, so that we know what the

disagreement is. But if the concept is essentially contested, then it is crazy to expect the rival conceptions to converge. If some of the concepts of politics are essentially contested, why not abandon them and replace them with ones that are not? The real importance of Gallie's idea lies in his suggestion that, in most of these cases, an on-going dispute about the "true meaning" of the concept may do more in the long run to develop and enrich the tradition of thought in which the concept originated, and nurture the values and purposes for which it was originally introduced, than any sort of sterile Hobbesian definition would do. The examples that he gave in his original paper were the concepts of *democracy*, *ari*, *science* and the *Christian way of life*. (More recently, his analysis has been extended to disputes about the



A picture from *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*, Vol. 2, Weimar, 1781, in the British Library, showing comfortable and functional clothing for children, based on the theories of John Locke.

true meaning of *justice*, *liberty* and *power*. It is certainly plausible to argue that democratic theory, the artistic and scientific traditions of the West, Christian ethics, and many of the other preoccupations of political science, have been advanced rather than retarded, and that our thinking about the concepts in question has become more subtle and sophisticated, as a result of these perennial and apparently intractable disputes.

It has to be said that none of this is uncontroversial. Many theorists reject Gallie's analysis altogether: they say that the proponents of essential contestability are committed to a hopeless conceptual relativism. Others make great use of Gallie's phrase but reject his account of the importance of essential contestability, using the notion simply as a cover for their own scepticism about objective standards and ideals in politics. Some prefer to stick with Stevenson's more openly cynical account of what is going on. And many persevere in the Hobbesian faith that, despite everything, a set of exact and agreed definitions in politics ought to be possible.

Controversial or not, there is no denying the importance of these developments. My first and most fundamental criticism of Roger Scruton's *Dictionary of Political Thought* is that it contrives somehow to avoid any reference to them. There is a sketchy and inadequate entry in the dictionary for *persuasive definition* – a few lines about "attaching the value of one thing to the reality of another", but no indication that Stevenson's idea was connected with a theory of emotive meaning, and so awareness of the significance of his idea for the enterprise of constructing a dictionary in this area. As for the more recent developments, Scruton does not list or define *essentially contested concepts* or the distinction between *concept* and *conception*, and he makes no allusion to Gallie's contribution or its

subsequent discussion in political theory. This cannot be because Scruton is unacquainted with essential contestability: the phrase is introduced once, out of the blue, and without further explanation in his entry for *philosophy*. But elsewhere, in the entries for *democracy*, *freedom*, *power* and *justice*, for example, Gallie's idea is conspicuous by its absence.

This is certainly very odd. I would have thought that any account of rival and disputed definitions in a dictionary of this sort would cry out for some reference to current theories about the cause and nature of conceptual disagreement. It is not as if we have one batch of theorists offering their alternative definitions and another batch (whom Scruton can afford to ignore) offering theories about what the first lot are doing. The same theorists are doing both jobs. Political theory is now (and if Hobbes is typical it has always been) an extremely self-conscious activity. One would certainly expect a dictionary to be at least self-conscious about the process of definition as the users of the words it is defining.

I do not want to suggest that Scruton has simply gone ahead and presented, under cover of a dictionary, his own favoured conceptions of the controversial concepts in question, or that he has been unfair to any of the disputants. On the whole, he has set out the rival positions in a clear and even-handed way. My worry is that the casual reader may come away with an impression that these disagreements simply exist. It will be a mystery to him why they go on year after year, and why the antagonists have not agreed centuries ago to disengage on the basis of a redefinition of terms.

I suspect also that to see or two places Scruton's failure to address these issues has affected his presentation of the first-order disputes. Reading the entry for *power*, for example, one does not get a sense of any of the major controversies that have surrounded the concept in the past twenty years. How closely is power to be associated with overt coercion? What is the relation between power and violence? Is power a function of individuals or of social structures which in some sense constitute individuals? What is the relation between rival conceptions of power and rival methodologies in political science? The discussion of these issues is inextricably bound up with essential contestability and conceptual relativism. It may be unfair to Scruton, but I have a hunch that his failure to address the one set of issues has led him to neglect the other.

Blood has been shed over the meaning of "justice" and "power" but not, I suspect, over the meaning of "Thomas" and "Roger". Proper names provide us with a different sort of entertainment. As one would expect, Scruton's dictionary lists names of thinkers as well as concepts and movements, and it is diverting to thumb through and see who in ad who's out among our contemporaries.

Twenty-two living thinkers are listed, of whom only six are more than a couple of lines: Althusser, Hayek, Nozick, Oakeshott, Popper and Rawls. (The greatest amount of space is devoted to Nozick, but then his ideas are probably more in need of articulation than anyone else's.) Of the other sixteen, four are economists, two are psychiatrists, one a philosopher (Quine), one a sex or rest "social theorist" (Deleuze), and the rest are miscellaneous. There are bound to be quibbles about a selection like this and their subjectivity can make them boring. Still, for what they're worth, here are my complaints. It is hard to see why Isaiah Berlin, Robert Dahl, H. L. A. Hart, C. B. Macpherson, and Thomas Kuhn have been dropped from the side; they seem at least as important to political thought as, say, Elias Canetti, Czeslaw Milosz and E. P. Thompson. (But Berlin and the others are in good company: somehow Socrates appears to have escaped notice, even in the article on Plato.)

It is a mystery too why there is no sustained account of the thought of Michel Foucault or Hannah Arendt. Neither rates more than four lines for Scruton, yet both have produced work of the first importance and work which is distinguished, in each case, by its individuality and by the fact that it does not fit easily into any of the other schools and traditions which Scruton discusses.

On the great dead thinkers, Scruton's articles are helpful though predictable. The occasional error is predictable too. The withering away of the state? Is not Marx's phrase for the abolition of the state? The abolition of the state, which is a somewhat different idea, not mentioned at all in the dictionary. Benham's principle of utility is not "The greatest happiness of the greatest number" (an impressive formula like "The fastest car for the lowest price") but rather "The greatest good for the greatest number". There is a serious omission in the article on Kant of any discussion of his political philosophy, as opposed to his ethics. Kant's account of the distinction between *virtue* and *justice*, and his "hypothetical" social contract idea, are both overlooked. And Rousseau did not say that "Dignity of government is the only form of government that can preserve man's natural liberty". Rousseau insisted that the people as a whole should agree on the fundamental laws of the state, but that government (in the sense of mundane legislation and administration) could never be democratic, not even in Geneva.

I have concentrated at length in Scruton's account of the more familiar aspects of political thought: the well-trodden controversies and the household names. But I suppose that people buy this book, they will do so not because they want to look up *Socrates* or *Hobbes* or *power*, but because they want to know, for instance, what *counterfactualism*, *ultramodernism*, *narodnik* or *ultramodernism* mean. It is the jargon of political thought, the technical terms, the portmanteau words, the acronyms, and the names of the acts, the schools, and the factious which occupy most of this dictionary and in which its greatest value consists.

One of the most useful terms that Scruton defines is "marxizing". Marxizing is to scatter allusions to Marx thought in one's speeches and writings, usually to impress others with one's leftist credentials. ("But seriously, comrades, all marxizing aside...") In a rare flash of self-consciousness, Scruton notes that marxizing is an occupational hazard of a dictionary compiler. On my count, it is necessary to marxize to the extent of 153 entries (out of a possible 1200) dealing with Marxist or neo-Marxist names or concepts. When you consider it, this is an immense task for the thought of one man to have led on a discipline – to have generated more than an eighth of his specialized vocabulary. (Either that, or the proportion pays tribute to the extent to which other traditions of political thought have managed to exclude themselves in terms that are not immediately intelligible and for which no dictionary is necessary.)

Connected with this is the important political thought of the ideas and vocabulary of economics. Scruton defines more than 180 technical economic terms (that's not counting the Marxist ones), and in this respect his dictionary will be as helpful to academic political theorists as to journalists, librarians, biologists, and marxizers who will, I think, make no male audience.

I have been rather critical of Scruton's *Dictionary of Political Thought*. It is not an infallible guide, and there are some serious omissions. But I should say finally that this dictionary is written clearly and composed intelligently of a comprehensive system of cross-references. It has its idiosyncrasies, but it would every compiler of such a book feel obliged to include entries for *architecture*, *Common Prayer*, *Opus Dei*, sex and *mobydick*. And it is doubly satisfactory, first, because it seems utterly plausible to me, and secondly, because the data it will be "differently treated" by different theories. The book's data are not answerable to any particular theory.

Theorizing below the threshold

Kathleen Wilkes

Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins (Editors)

Philosophical Essays on Freud
219pp. Cambridge University Press.
£12.50 (pb). £25.95 (hbk).
0 521 24076 X

Freud's own neglect of philosophy, as David Sachs reminds us in this volume, was "greatly facilitated by the 'practical' inactivity" of his philosophy. This has no more discouraged philosophers from speculating what they can from Freud than his equally cavalier disregard for empirical studies ("I cannot put much value on these confirmations... It can do no harm") has deterred them from trying to assess the empirical vulnerability of his theory.

The present volume tries to derive from Freud's work conclusions about the philosophical status of his hypotheses. All the contributors are concerned with questions of theory or method. Apart from this, the collection has little to say, indeed, once or twice Freud is not the gate-crasher than the host at the philosophical banquet. A final preliminary: the relation of this book to the *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, is puzzling. At best seven of the articles are reprinted from the 1974 collection, and it is surely a missed opportunity to overlap extensively with a deservedly popular volume only eight years in print.

The scientific standing of psychoanalysis is a recurrent theme in these essays. Clark Glymour, B. R. Coie, et al., Patrick Suppes and Herman Warren, all deal explicitly with the problem, but the familiar psycho- versus causes debate concerns only, as does the question of metaphor and anthropomorphism in the theory; Ronald de Sousa, although primarily concerned with Freud's theory of normality, emphasizes the work that needs to be done to make the theory of instincts more rational. The association left in the reader's mind is, unsurprisingly, "not proven".

Glymour encouragingly shows how one might set about obtaining evidence for or against a set of psychoanalytic hypotheses, but then discouragingly shows how the description of the Rat Man case fails to support Freud's conclusions. Nonetheless, Glymour's "theory-testing strategy" is one that would interest those who hope to improve upon Freud's inattention to confirmatory considerations. The contribution of Coie et al., of a rather heavy style, Frank Cioffi in particular, should not have been prioted without at least Cioffi's target article. As it is, the tenor of the attack – Cioffi's "as if" passages from Freud (whereas Coie et al. merely "quote" Cioffi) and his propounds arguments of his methodological imagination? Popper "thru" Freud, Joseph Agassi is guilty of a "crude, non-sequitur" – puts the reader's sympathy firmly behind those who assailed.

None of the contributors deals directly with the severe threat of radical underdetermination. This omission is the more noticeable in that Brian Parrell has recently (in *The Soundings of Psychoanalysis*) thoroughly developed the question of underdetermination: "Could it be that what has been differently treated?" Parrell's book appeared too late for explicit discussion in this collection, certainly; but the problem is familiar enough. James Hopkins, in a contribution to his admirably clear introduction, suggests that it is "utterly implausible" to suppose, with Parrell, that non-Freudian theory could explain Freud's data equally well, but that it is doubly unsatisfactory, first, because it seems utterly plausible to me, and secondly, because the data it will be "differently treated" by different theories. The book's data are not answerable to any particular theory.

Most of the other contributors either assume the truth of Freudian theory, or else content themselves with a minimalist interpretation: retaining, say, the dynamic unconscious but prudently neglecting heavier theoretical postulates such as introjection, incorporation, Thanatos, the superego, resistance and the like. Of the former group, Suppes and Warren produce an impressive taxonomy of forty-four different defence mechanisms, so characterized that they could be subjected to empirical investigation. It is perhaps ungenerous to comment how reminiscent this seems of the number-juggling in which post-Humean associationist psychologists indulged: three Principles of Association, then nineteen, here one, there twenty-four. In any case, for anyone convinced of the overall viability of Freudian theory, this is exactly the sort of work that is most essential. It seems at first that B. J. O'Shaughnessy, who claims to look for "certain phenomena in mental life that make plausible such a theory as that of the id", is equally seeking to support the empirical basis of part of Freud's work. However, it quickly becomes apparent that he hands himself anything else he wants from the backing theory (Eros, the ego with all its powers and characteristics, secondary elaboration, the Apollonian dream-work), and against this background it is hardly surprising to discover that one needs the id too. As a sympathetic exegesis, the essay is helpful; but it provides no independent support for the postulation of the id. Wollheim accepts one of the most theoretical strands of Freud's theory, the speculations about introjection, incorporation and projection, and shows how there are extra wrinkles to the mind-body relation if one accepts that mental states represent themselves as bodily states; I was left uncertain about the implications that Wollheim thinks his intricate arguments have for the mind-body question generally, and the uses to which he puts the crucial notion of "self-representation" baffled me completely.

At the other extreme are those whose discussions are practically independent of Freud, and certainly independent of the full-blown theory. Donald Davidson's treatment of motivated irrationality, an important successor to his well-known article on weakness of will, need never have mentioned Freud at all; Stuart Hampshire and David Pearm seem to need little more than the assumption of a reasonably active non-conscious (that is, not "the System Us" in all its glory) plus a concession that genetic explanation has a role to play – two proposals that many non-Freudians would be willing to grant. Perhaps all three would regard this as an oversimplification of their positions, but I expect that philosophers and psychologists alike, whatever opinion they hold of Freud, will want to concern themselves with Hampshire's characteristically subtle discussion of dispositions and memory, and with Pearm's analysis of the nature and distinguishing marks of various forms of conflict, akrasia, self-deception and cognitive dissonance.

Even with a minimalist adoption of Freud's theory, practically all the contributors either assume or discuss the metaphors which characterize the divided mind: Sartre's objections to this score are the most familiar, and it is Pears rather than Herbert Fingarette who puts them in perspective; W. D. Hart develops a perceptual model of consciousness, leaving it unclear how far the model can be pushed; Irving Thalberg, seems to assume that any analogy or exercise to anthropomorphism can fairly be pressed to the (inevitable) point of ultimate incoherence. Although real, the difficulty here is surely much exaggerated by undue literal-mindedness. As Thomas Nagel (*Inter much alla*) suggests, we should by now be reconciled to the idea of theorizing about internal states in mentalistic terms; not just psychoanalysis, but biology, not just psychology, so regularly, moreover, a point which all non-behaviourist psychologists, not just Freudians, must insist on – we neither can nor should import all the

ordinary language implications of homely psychological terms when we ascribe them to non-human systems or to parts of the agent. Keith Gunderson remarks somewhere that the fact that rolling stones and rolling people share the property of gathering no moss does not make one a borderline case of the other; even if the ego, or the left hemisphere, or a computer, are characterized in "human" terms, it is yet not necessarily appropriate to wonder whether they will catch a chill without warm pyjamas – precisely what implications are indeed common to the ordinary and to the extended ascriptions of mentalistic terms is, as Nagel emphasizes, something we have yet to discover. The result may be very difficult to imagine; in Nagel's terms, it may be impossible to understand "what it is like to be" the System Us or the right hemisphere of the human brain; but that is a consequence we surely have to accept.

Nagel's reservations about the

capacities of ordinary language and commonsense understanding are interestingly complemented by Adam Morton's discussion of the impact of psychoanalytic theory upon our everyday conception of ourselves. His thesis is suggestive rather than solidly argued; in fact, the only instance given of a Freudian term that has entered the vernacular is "compulsive" (I pass over the regrettable "anal room"). The essay provokes several questions; in particular, just how extensive and significant is the infection from psychoanalytic theory, especially when compared to that from systems-theory; and how much will prove to be no more than the fatuous "psychobabble" whose prevalence Morton also acknowledges?

There is something in this collection for everybody; although, perhaps, no more than a few will find a great deal. Given the aliveness of the unifying thread, this is scarcely a surprising result.

Back to nature

Onora O'Neill

ROGER TRIGG

The Shaping of Man: Philosophical Aspects of Sociobiology
186pp. Blackwell. £12.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 631 13023 3

This book does not offer any substantive account of "the shaping of man"; but it deals with far more than the "philosophical aspects of sociobiology". Roger Trigg addresses the enormous question of whether there is any common human nature, and while he does not demonstrate that there is, he does provide a forceful reason for believing that we cannot get very far in human endeavours if there is not.

Trigg first considers various modern writers who have held that there is no common human nature. Some, like Sartre, have seen only the diversity of self-definitions of individual men; others, including Collingwood and Gadamer, have seen rather the diversities of culture and tradition. Trigg argues that denying a common human nature calls the very comprehensibility of others into question. If their nature is not ours, then their concepts and understanding will not be ours, and our understanding of their thought, literature and past is impossible: "hermeneutics becomes necessary, and at the same time impossible, discipline". In discarding all conception of a common human nature, modern would-be humanists have locked themselves into forms of relativism which undermine the possibility of literary, historical and moral understanding. They avoid this only when, despite the rhetoric, they maintain or reintroduce some conception of common human nature. Fortunately, Trigg argues, Sartre, Collingwood and (at times) Peter Winch do just this.

A second group of modern writers also denies that there is any common human nature, but for scientific rather than humanistic reasons. If reality is seen as socially constructed, or if human beings are taken to be entirely the products of their environments, then everything men are or can be is to be explained in terms of something other than human nature. Trigg argues that such determinism, theories dispensed with a concept of human nature at the cost of understanding all reasons for their own acceptance. Within a global determinism belief itself is determined, rather than held for reasons, and hence the determinism itself cannot be held for reasons. This argument is not new, but is deployed effectively against a number of distinct determinisms. Epistemological difficulties are shown to await those whose denial of human nature undercuts conceptions of truth and reason, as well as those whose denial shows us that this difficult task can be avoided only at enormous cost.

human beings as lacking in common nature, although it is less clear about whether there is a common human nature. However, in Trigg's view, it does not avoid all the difficulties into which writers who have denied a common human nature have fallen. Sociobiologists who have advocated a form of genetic determinism have exposed their theory to the same collapse of the notions of truth and reason, and hence of reasons for its own acceptance, which other global determinisms have. Sociobiologists who take their theory to explain only aspects of human behaviour and variety can claim only quite specific achievements. The mechanisms of natural selection can account for behaviour only in so far as its genetic basis would have been more likely to survive than alternatives. Hence the "altruism" of parents and incest taboos might, though they need not, have a genetic basis. But there is no way in which species-wide "altruism" could be similarly explained, since such behaviour typically gives advantage to rivals and to the survival of "altruist" genes. Genuine altruism and cultural and moral diversity are not, in Trigg's view, likely to be explained sociobiologically. At most, certain tendencies may be shown to have a genetic basis. However, once we construe sociobiology as less than a global genetic determinism, the question is open, as traditionally, of whether morality and culture require us to fall in with or to resist our natural tendencies.

These arguments provide solid reasons against rejecting the conception of a common human nature. But Trigg is tantalizingly brief on what he thinks that nature may be, or how it might be investigated. He says little about his underlying realism about species and its further implications, and still less about the likelihood of sociobiological explanations of cognitive capacities. He does not discuss whether an adequate conception of human nature would have to be universally exemplified, or whether it could be lacking in some "unnatural" humans. Above all he avoids both claims and speculation on what human nature is. He observes that "the concept of human nature does not require any particular metaphysical background", and that it does not stand or fall with, for example, physicalism or idealism or even sociobiology. In common with some other recent writers – for example, Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* and Yvonne Haksar in *Liberty, Equality and Perfectionism* – he insists that we cannot do without some conception of human nature but tells us little about what that conception should be. However, it is in moving from a wholly schematic to a more determinate account of human nature that the characteristic epistemological difficulties of establishing "what is natural to men" emerge. What Trigg's argument shows is that this difficult task can be avoided only at enormous cost.

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Supervenient thoughts

Jonathan Lear

COLIN MCGINN

The Character of Mind

132pp. Oxford University Press.
£8.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0 19 219171 3

To begin with the author's epilogue: the philosophy of mind must remain in the heart of philosophy. For philosophy's animating task is to understand both the world and our ability to understand it, but we can understand neither what the world is like nor how we come to appreciate it if we are ignorant of the nature of the minds that set out to tackle such questions: namely, our own. If we are, so to speak, all wearing mental sunglasses, then our perception of the Form of the Good will be misleading. An acceptable metaphysics, Colin McGinn correctly argues, must yield a credible epistemology. Indeed, much of the motivation for the philosophy of language in this century has derived from a conception of language as mind externalized. The way to study thoughts, it is commonly believed, is to study their verbal expression. If, however, one begins to doubt that thoughts require a linguistic medium, as McGinn does, then one's direct philosophical concern with the nature of the mind will increase, and one's concern for the character of language will correspondingly diminish.

This book attempts an a priori investigation into the nature of the mind. That is, it tries to discover what the mind must be like independently of any empirical investigation, such as psychology. Thus its discoveries should be deeply unparochial: they should apply to any minds whatsoever, whether exemplified in humans, in computers or in ET. A priori inquiries are out of fashion, and one of this book's many virtues is its willingness to indulge in unfashionable methods and question widely held beliefs. Although I disagree with many of McGinn's substantive positions, I nevertheless think that this book provides a very good introduction to the philosophy of mind. It is written with confidence and authority. Its six chapters – on the disparate nature of mental phenomena, the relation of mind and body, the mind's acquaintance with external objects and with itself, whether thoughts require a language to express them, the nature of action as opposed to mere bodily movement, the nature of the self and self-consciousness – deftly introduce the central problems in the philosophy of mind. There is a clarity of exposition, seriousness of tone and enthusiasm for the subject which, together with the inexpensive price of the paperback edition, make this book a fine text for an undergraduate course.

In his chapter on the relation of the mind to the body, McGinn argues that two very different sorts of considerations pull us in different directions. On the one hand, awareness of our consciousness and subjectivity make us loath to identify the mind with the brain. How could a feeling of pain just be a physical arrangement of molecules? On the other hand, when we think of how the mind interacts with the body, how our

beliefs, wants, feelings affect the way we act, it is difficult to believe that the mind is substantially different from the body. For then how could mind and body interact? McGinn rejects both dualism and a monism that equates types of mental phenomena, like pains, with types of physical phenomena, like C-fibre stimulation. The way out of this apparent dilemma, he thinks, is to heed the ontological distinction between substance and attribute: the same physical substance, a living human body, can have both physical and mental properties and neither of these properties need be reducible to the other. Mental events, such as current thoughts and feelings, pose a problem since they seem to be entities of a sort, yet McGinn thinks we can identify mental events in the brain. These events will have both mental and physical properties.

This non-reductive monism, McGinn recognizes, is not a sufficiently strong position to be able to rule out the possibility that two creatures could be precisely identical physically and yet share no mental properties. "This degree of independence of the mental with respect to the physical is not acceptable: we want to say that, if two creatures differ mentally, then they differ physically, and if a creature changes mentally it changes physically." The supervenience thesis which McGinn endorses holds that a creature's mental properties cannot vary while his physical properties are kept constant.

I do not think that an individual's beliefs and thoughts are supervenient upon his physical properties and this relates to my central disagreement with McGinn: I think that he dismisses too quickly the social character of the mind. As Tyler Burge has shown in a series of fascinating articles, one can deploy Wittgensteinian considerations about meaning to show that the content of a man's beliefs can differ from the content of the same beliefs, for example, a man who has many true beliefs about pneumonia: that it is a bacterial infection, that it causes congestion in the chest, that great strides have been made in treating and preventing pneumonia, that he recently was treated for pneumonia, etc. Suppose also that he (falsely) believes that his pneumonia has not been cured, but has spread to his stomach. When his doctor tells him that it is impossible to have pneumonia in the stomach, he is relieved and gives up the belief. Now hold everything about his physical make-up and history constant up to the time he tells the doctor of his fear and suppose, counterfactually, that in his linguistic community the word "pneumonia" is used as a generic term to apply to bacterial infections in the chest and stomach. Burge argues that in this counterfactual situation it is not that a false belief has been converted into a true one; but that this man no longer has any beliefs, fears, thoughts or hopes about pneumonia. How could he? The word "pneumonia" in his community doesn't mean pneumonia, so any beliefs he would express with the word "pneumonia" would not be about pneumonia and neither is there any other word in the supposed community that means pneumonia.

McGinn would reply that he is

sceptical of all the extant arguments that thoughts, even sophisticated thoughts, require language as a necessary vehicle. He even tries to turn the tables by wondering, rhetorically, what a difference of meaning could consist in beyond the expression of different concepts. Here, I would have liked to see him address more directly and in more detail the question of the relation of the social and the mental.

I also wonder how well his adherence to supervenience coheres with his own account of beliefs based on perceptual experience. The content of a belief, says that I am now seeing Socrates, contains, McGinn says, two elements: the phenomenological content of the experience and the actual object Socrates. The phenomenological content must, McGinn argues, be described using only general terms, for the experience would be the same whether one was seeing Socrates or a Socrates look-alike. If that means that one must restrict oneself to using such standard general terms as "pale", "bald", "snub-nosed", then McGinn's "generality thesis" is

The wheel of fashion

Mark Platts

A. J. AYER

Philosophy in the Twentieth Century
283pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£12.50.
0 297 78179 0

Lovers of wisdom and seekers after eternal profundities they may be, but philosophers are no less subject to the vagaries of fashion than other human beings. Ideas as to which are the most fruitful methods to be employed, which the central questions of the subject, even as to its aims and purposes: all seem to change with quite startling frequency as each fresh philosophical generation apparently sets about the dismantling and re-arranging of its immediate philosophical inheritance. Perhaps this is even more noticeably true of philosophy in the English-speaking world in the twentieth century than in any other time and place – though it might seem to be so merely because of the inevitable lack, at present, of a truly historical appreciation of the relevant work. The most dedicated follower of this year's fashion can owe more to last year's than he realizes or wishes. But if it is true that fashion-consciousness is exhibited to a significantly higher degree by Anglo-Saxon philosophy in this century, the question must arise as to why this is so.

One explanation would look to the remarkable institutionalization of philosophical activity during the present century, and the concomitant treatment of philosophy as a professional career. That certainly could begin to explain some of the less agreeable aspects of the current scene. But a more charitable explanation could be cast in terms of the growth of the subject's self-consciousness. If philosophers are in the business, amongst other things, of questioning platitudes that others accept without thinking twice, they ought surely to adopt the same critical stance towards their own platitudes about the forms, concerns and purposes of such questioning. This introduces the danger that philosophers will disappear up their own arguments and their own arguments; and it all along, since, as David Lewis once noted, philosophers are more easily discredited than platitudes.

Sir Alfred Ayer was primarily responsible for the rise in this and in many other countries of a major philosophical fashion. His early classic *Language, Truth and Logic* served to disseminate and to develop most of the key ideas of the so-called Vienna Circle. But nearly fifty years have since passed and in this latest work, conceived as a sequel to Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, Ayer recognizes that "few of the principal theses of the Vienna Circle survive intact". Indeed, few survive even in dismembered form. Yet *Philosophy in*

too strong: it is unlikely that any such list of general terms could more than roughly characterize the content of experience. But it is his inclusion of an actual object, Socrates, as part of the content of belief that leads to trouble. If, for example, it is not Socrates I am seeing but a look-alike, then, on McGinn's account, it is not that I believe falsely that I am seeing Socrates, but rather that I don't have the belief I think I have. McGinn is willing to accept this as a perhaps surprising corollary of an attractive theory of belief. Of course, one is not absolute arbiter of what beliefs one has, but McGinn's account makes it impossible that I should in such circumstances believe that I am seeing Socrates. I take this to provide strong prima-facie evidence against his theory of belief. In any case, how can this account of belief be compatible with supervenience? For suppose I am now seeing Socrates, hold everything physical about me constant and substitute a Socrates look-alike. Physically I am the same but my beliefs, on McGinn's account, have changed.

The *Twentieth Century* ends with Ayer admitting that he would be more proud than otherwise were his rejection of some currently modish employment of essentialist talk and doctrine to lead to his being taken for "an old-fashioned empiricist".

Unsurprisingly, then, this book has features which put it at odds with some now prevailing fashions – not least the author's characteristic elegance of style, economy of expression and breadth of philosophical interest. C. I. Lewis, Collingwood and Broad, for example, receive a more detailed and sympathetic treatment than any *opinionado* of the current scene might expect – and, indeed, in the case of Collingwood at least, than one familiar with Ayer's own conception of philosophy might expect. In most cases this studied neglect of the vogue yields substantial dividends: I doubt, for example, that I shall be the only one moved to read C. F. Lewis more carefully thanks to Ayer's consideration of his work.

None of which is meant to imply that this book reveals the author of *Language, Truth and Logic* now to be out of touch with current work in his subject; for it strikingly does not. Rather it suggests that he is out of sympathy with much of that work, and naturally chooses to devote more space to what he finds more congenial. The philosophy of mind, moral philosophy and, less obviously, philosophical logic receive less attention than they merit, but the space thus saved enables Ayer to elaborate at greater length upon his perceptive central concern with the philosophy of perception and with the family of mind-body problems. (I found Ayer's discussion of physicalist solutions to the mind-body problems much the least satisfactory part of this book: too allusive, sketchy and uncharacteristically unconvincing in its dismissal of the views of others.) A history of recent philosophy is even less history and more philosophy than is the history of philosophy in general, and Ayer rightly expands upon his own views on the problems treated of by others. But he resists any temptation to make himself out as the cement of the twentieth-century philosophical universe and often sensibly contents himself with reference to his other works. Here the balance seems exactly right.

It is somewhat surprising to find a chapter entirely devoted to the Continental brethren in the persons of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Sartre. Ayer's admirable patience and fairness, so well exemplified in the rest of this book, are clearly strained by these, elsewhere still fashionable, thinkers. Some discussions are cast in terms such that the mere act of entering into them heralds a corruption. It is perhaps not by coincidence that two of the three mentioned Continental thinkers are, amongst the six philosophers the publishers have chosen to picture upon the cover of the book, Fashion breeds dividends, albeit not always of an intellectual kind.

Fully justified

David Smith

RODERICK M. CHISHOLM

The Foundations of Knowledge
216pp. Brighton: Harvester, £22.50.
0 7108 0375 7

Epistemology, or the Theory of Knowledge, has been one of the most philosophical industries over the past twenty years, especially in the United States; indeed, Hector-Neri Castaneda has recently wondered whether there may not be some interesting sociological reason for the recent American fascination with this subject. Be this as it may, Roderick Chisholm has not only doubt one of the most productive and influential of recent American epistemologists.

These philosophers have two principal concerns. One is to provide an adequate analysis of knowledge – the need for such an analysis being acute since Edmund L. Gettier emphasized the inadequacy of the traditional account of knowledge as justified true belief. (I say *re-emphasized* since Russell long ago pointed out the inadequacy.) The other is to delineate the structure of a set of justified beliefs. According to one ancient view, although many of our beliefs may be justified by appeal to other beliefs that we have, at least some of our beliefs must be intrinsically justified, for otherwise every attempt at justification would involve an infinite regress of appeals to other beliefs we have, each one of which itself requires a justification. A philosopher who recognizes the need for intrinsically justified beliefs – "unmoved or self-moved movers" – Chisholm himself has characterized them – is termed a *foundationalist*.

Although of ancient lineage, foundationalism has come in for some attack recently, and Chisholm has emerged as one of its staunchest defenders. The main problem for the foundationalist is to show how his belief could be antinomously justified, and to isolate a class of beliefs which are thus justified. Chisholm does not concern himself with the first part of this problem; rather, he relies on the regress argument to show that belief must be foundationalist truths and presents as self-evident truths a set of epistemic principles specifying the justificatory status of different classes of our beliefs. Although most philosophers agree that at least some of Chisholm's principles indeed appear plausible, many are dissatisfied with his appeal to self-evidence. Thus he is often claimed that epistemic justification is internally related to truth; hence an epistemic principle must be validated by being shown to be conducive to holding true rather than false beliefs. Chisholm never attempts such a demonstration. His own concept of the years has been with reference to a tentative analysis of principles, and then gradually to refine it in the light of counter-examples. Indeed, many philosophers such as methodological progressive revision is often termed "Chisholmian way". Because of this, and because of the stature of the man, a new work by Chisholm is generally a significant event.

When one turns to this latest book, however, one cannot but feel disappointment. About half the book is taken up by a reprint of a piece written in the 1960s, which no longer adequately represents Chisholm's position. Over a quarter of the book consists of recently published articles, many of which are illuminating and make a contribution that is quite valuable in demonstrating that no one exception, they are all of a lightweight or unoriginal piece of work. The one exception is a piece on good examples of recent Chisholmism but they hardly justify the appearance of the book. Given its disappointing nature, and given also that it contains quite extraordinarily large numbers of misprints, the price of £22.50 is monstrous.

Touring the monuments

Sarah Waterlow

B. M. HARE

Plato

Epp.

0 19 287386 8

JONATHAN BARNES

Aristotle

Epp.

0 19 287382 5

Oxford University Press. £6.95 each (paperback, £1.50).

There is something here for everyone with a nose for philosophy and its history. Meant primarily for the general reader, to whom they can be warmly recommended, these books would interest all concerned with the transmission of large, difficult and remote ideas. The writers bring to their task a wealth of learning and reflection which is here put to work with admirable effectiveness on the non-specialist's behalf. Each in less than ninety pages makes his monumental subject – real, intelligible and interesting. Selective emphasis is inevitable, but rather than oversimplify or to concentrate on what they consider central. Even so, these books contain a remarkable range of background information and discussion.

R. M. Hare's Plato is predominantly a moral philosopher concerned with the rational ends of human conduct. Professor Hare begins by relating this concern to the events of Plato's life, especially to the political upheavals and what he grew up to see. This period of bitter conflict, between and within the Greek city states, brought corruption not only of men and manners, but of the very "language of morals", as Hare shows by quotations from *Protagoras*, who witnessed it. Plato's search for knowledge of the good, as distinct from "right opinion", has often been challenged as failing to recognize

the difference between value and objective fact: when people agree on the facts of a case they may still take different moral attitudes. Plato's approach has also, especially recently, been criticized as over-intellectualist. Here, however, sympathetically presents it as a response to the essentially practical need for authoritative principles of action. When received values no longer command automatic respect throughout society, right opinion is important to guide, for who by opinion can know whose opinion is right? As for moral disagreement, this for Plato, as Hare shows him, proves not that the good lies beyond knowledge, but that knowledge is not opinion, being as steady as truth itself, and impossible to rival or oust.

Against this background Hare explains Plato's conception of knowledge and its objects, the method by which he believed it could be gained, and the political and social arrangements he saw to be necessary for it to be fully effective in practice. Without encumbering the reader with problems of interpretation, Hare enables him to appreciate some of the difficulties arising from Plato's native idiom, from his lack of an established terminology and, not least, from the complexity of his philosophical personality. He warns against the anachronism of expecting from Plato all the distinctions we ourselves might make. But possibly he falls into anachronism himself, in his chapter on Plato's psychology. Plato divides the human mind into "reason", "spirit" and "appetite"; Hare assesses this as if it were a confused attempt at the more modern division into cognitive and motivational faculties. (Also mistakenly, in my opinion, he attributes the latter division to Aristotle.) But Plato's three factors are each essentially cognitive and motivational: they differ not as cognition from conation, but as centred on different sorts of objective. This view, although strange to us, is not obviously incoherent. That Plato held it may help explain why he does not

recognize the fact/value distinction, since this is historically bound up with the non-Platonic contrast of cognitive versus conative powers. A more careful analysis Hare might also have strengthened Hare's closing chapters on Plato's authoritarian state, and on his general achievement. But these chapters provide a good example of Hare's ability to sympathize with both Plato and the likely reader of this book. Critical of the former, he shows how the liberalism of the latter faces a powerful challenge requiring a rational answer.

In Aristotle, perhaps by contrast, we have an individual whose master-passion was knowledge for its own sake. Jonathan Barnes states this on his first page, and spells it out through this book in clear and generous detail. Aristotle investigated every aspect of knowledge, theoretical, productive and practical; he founded the sciences of formal logic and biology; he was the first to elaborate a detailed theory of the structure of scientific systems; and by his metaphysics of changing empirical substances, he created a philosophical framework in which the Western intellect could proceed to science in rational confidence, as never before, that the natural universe is a world of intelligible systems awaiting human discovery through sense experience. Aristotle could not foresee how science eventually, on many fronts, would continue to achieve its advances only by leaving the Aristotelian cradle. But the Aristotle at any rate of Barnes's portrait, could he know of those developments, would react not (as some histories of philosophy may suggest) with the shock of a dogmatist threatened, but with pride, admiration and, above all, the active interest of a tireless inquirer.

In twenty short chapters Barnes shows this interest powering Aristotle's researches on every level, from "being *qua* being" to the size and formation of the octopus's tentacles. That sharpness of observation, and that feel for analogies, differences and

concrete functional relationships which made Aristotle a brilliant naturalist, carried over into his philosophy, here taking the form of unrivalled sensitivity to the logical structures and connections which live beneath the surface of language. His achievement is so clearly impressive that in order for eyes to be opened to it, even at this distance of time, little more is needed than plain description with the minimum of defence.

Barnes has provided a description which does justice to the grandeur and breadth of its subject, although some will feel that the ethics, politics and literary theory receive a less than rightful share of attention, considering their importance in the history of our culture. Such is the succinctness of Barnes's writing, that even a few more pages spared for these would have been to good effect. However, what he shows us is Aristotle the "prince" of philosopher-scientists, and from this point of view there is little to criticize in the account. Barnes's explanations of the syllogism and of the Aristotelian

ideal of science are especially good. So is his account of the doctrine of the four types of cause suffers from over-detailed concern with the relatively esoteric problem of accommodating all the types to Aristotle's theory of demonstration. Readers of this introductory book would, I believe, benefit more from being told of the inadequacies Aristotle found in the causal notions employed by his predecessors.

Finally, given his general emphasis, Barnes is surprisingly dismissive of Aristotle's remarks – few, obscure but impossible to ignore – to the effect that intellectual activity, alone of the functions of the soul, does not depend on the body. Barnes does not mention the belief which was Aristotle's reason for this view, even though it surely played some part in motivating the vast researches here described. Because, Aristotle says, the intellect "*thinks everything*", it, unlike sight or taste or hearing, has no specific physical basis which would naturally limit its scope.

Temporal constructs

Adam Morton

AGNES HELLER

A Theory of History

333pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£15.
0 7100 9010 2

Once there were positivists, who roamed the paperscape looking for nonsense. Without a steady supply of intelligent, culturally conscious nonsense-protein they died out. Perhaps we need them again. They would have loved Agnes Heller's book, with its layers of sceptical opinions and phrases wound round a skeleton of solid, if fragile, ideas. Its subject is History – history as the past, or history as the occupation of historians, or history as the preoccupation of civilized people; it is often not clear which. History, whatever it is, is what distinguishes non-barbarians from non-non-barbarians. This is Agnes Heller's preoccupation. Her central claim is that our membership of our own culture is based on our having its idea of time, on both the historical and the everyday scale.

Heller wants to place this modern historical sense among other possible attitudes to time. She does this by describing various forms of historical consciousness and trying to say where we stand in the development, not of history, but of the sense of history. She describes a series of stages (of course). The first is a primitive "level of unreflected generality" in which an infinite but "unconceptualized" past is captured only as myth, a myth that has no particular use for either present or future. The fifth stage, "the confusion of historical consciousness" is where we are now, where reflection on the present does not give us any certainty about the future. (As it, though this isn't the way Heller puts it, we had the conception of historical development through linear time that a Hegelian or Darwinian optimism generates, only without the optimism.) The task of the rest of her book is to tell us how to approach the future, by giving us a better grasp of the stages we've been through.

The trouble begins here, as the language thickens. Heller develops a picture of historiography as a hierarchy of generalizations, from small empirical generalizations (correlating, eg, the price of cotton with the frequency of lynching) to large and vague guiding principles (eg, "see history as the story of class rivalries"). This is much less controversial than she thinks, and some of the authorities she takes as enemies would not disagree with her. These chapters are flanked by more "high-down" sections, before which comes a section relating a culture's idea of history to its members' sense of everyday time. Apparently there are three kinds of present: "now", "just now", and "being now". Everything turns on how they are

related, and so it would help to understand the distinctions between them. Heller says that "Being now" comes about by inserting "now" into the context of "Being", by inserting it into the sequence between the beginning and the end. "Oot it?"

The book ends with a tangled argument for a simple, clear claim, that any philosophy of history (including, I gather, the implicit philosophy of a particular historical age) will present a normative picture of the future, a way in which what will be related to what ought to be. Or as she puts it:

Ought as is cannot be located in the past. In philosophies of history they resemble lovers who after thousands of years of engagement meet in the nuptial bed of the present and/or the future. This wedding in the end of history (or prehistory) for which the bell tolls. Heller is attempting something very ambitious here. She wants to derive from the earlier parts of the book a sort of determinism, not of the actual content of history but of the conception of time and history, and then from this to derive the necessity of a limited optimism. We have to think of the future as potentially utopian; to have our present historical sense is to be committed to thinking of the conflicts and problems of the present as potentially solvable.

Many of us are pessimistic enough to doubt that we know what proportion of our problems can be solved, or how many of our deep and central hopes may eventually seem confused or unobtainable. Yet we seem to operate with the same conception of time as more optimistic people, and we seem not obviously locked on to any absolute idea of the relation of past to present. Heller's view apparently entails that not to think of the future in utopian terms (with hope, if not confidence) is to be radically at odds with some dominant and inescapable feature of our thought. But no non-utopian is going to be convinced by her analysis; he can just say, plausibly, that he doesn't understand it. Moreover, it is consistent with her view that the future will be inescapably and incurably horrible; what follows from her view is merely that we cannot think that it will be.

Heller has three interesting ideas: that members of a culture share an understanding of history, that this understanding is tied to the way they think of the time of everyday life, and that there is a certain logic to the development of these understandings. None of these ideas is wildly novel, but each is worth arguing for (or against, for that matter). Each of them could only be argued for by developing a real theory. The social psychology of temporal constructs would cover them all. The theory would have to explain things that were otherwise mysterious. It would have to be, in the light of its explanatory power, intelligible. And it would have to make it clear what the claims ultimately being defended were.

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Saintly luggage

Linda Taylor

CLARE BOYLAN

Holy Pictures
201pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10926 4

Holy pictures are sexless. Towards the end of this first novel by Clare Boylan, Mory, the Cantwell's youngest daughter, has a collection of them given to her by her schoolfriends, as a condolence for the death (murder? suicide?) of her father. "The saints on these miniatures had been tamed by the artist's hand until they were neither too spirit, nor too woman," she lines them up in the bottom of an old trunk where, father, she had discovered, kept his mementoes (now, curiously, removed) of an Indian woman. The act is talismanic; it transforms her memory of an all too fleshy father - a father whose past had literally caught up with him in the sudden materialization of the Indian woman, who, it is revealed, had been married to him. Her recollection of his appearance is influenced by the sanctity of the pictures: "Father's yellow hair lengthened and curved. The red in his cheeks paled to the rosin of dawn. The glare of his eyes was tinged with awe."

The placing of the pictures in the trunk is a small but crucial act in a novel full of repressed sexuality. For this is Dublin in the 1920s; the perspective that of female, Roman Catholic girls about to become women. Mory, a fourteen-year-old sister, Nan, is self-consciously aware of the way in which her body is beginning to bulge uncontrollably and she and her friends find their allegiances divided between the sanctity of their convent school and the demanding lasciviousness of the world outside. To remain a child (and thus a potential saint?), Nan bandages her breasts, only to be accused of unnaturalness by her father. Mr Cantwell's view of female sexuality is concerned with another kind of bondage - the corset, which he manufactures and which is becoming increasingly unfashionable. Nan's gesture appears to him like an act of treason, both against her body and against his life's work.

Seen through the girls' eyes, the men in the book are disturbingly animal in their behaviour: youths at a party claw

at the food and shovel it into their mouths, a young priest visiting the school teasingly encourages the older girls to appreciate their bodies as God's work, and the rich, apparently gentlemanly, Mr Finnucane has wandering hands and kisses Nan "in a ponderous, munching way, like a cow eating grass". Confronted by Sister Immaculata, who "had a hunger for blood and seemed, herself, to possess none", and by Nelly, the Cantwell's maid, who tells sexy stories (though the children often fail to understand them as such), Nan and Mory have to find a way between spirituality and grossness. Mother is exquisite but remote; father is boorish and ineffectual - it is up to the children to work out the social and sexual facts of life for themselves.

Clare Boylan conveys the subdued nightmare of childhood and adolescence. Fears (of Schweitzer, the Jew; of Mrs Murtaz, the Indian, and so on) are irrational, but they are also a part of normality. Mory, in particular, is often more knowing in her innocence than the adults are with their worn-out experience. She understands, for instance, why Mrs Graham, one of father's adopted down and outs, hides her neck on top of the wardrobe (out of politeness; she has no teeth), and why the same woman carries a suitcase (thought to contain money) full of holy pictures. Mary knows that people, like animals (Berlie, the cowardly cat; Elizabeth, the infertile hen), need protection. Adult life is harsh and immoral and the girls, while accepting it as such, create their own, oddly insightful, solidarity against it. Boylan's facility for producing unusual similes often communicates some of the harshness: when Nellie angrily cooks kippers for another of father's female unfavourables, they emerge from the oven "dried into a tormented curve like the prisoners of Indian braves stacked out under the boiling sun". The comparison shows less the similarity of appearance between Indian braves and kippers than it does Nellie's vengefulness.

Holy Pictures is a sensitive, precise and evocative novel. It is disatisfying only in its refusal to be more expansive. Like the bandage round Nan's chest and the straps around Mrs Graham's suitcase, Clare Boylan's pared-down prose tantalizingly emphasises the possibility of a richer, if secret, potential.

In the shadow of Salome

Victoria Rothschild

LINA WERTMÜLLER

The Head of Alvis
255pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0 434 88580 1

Lina Wertmüller's first novel is a neatly constructed picaresque tale of paranoia, Sammy, the neurotic, New York Jewish narrator, conceives at an early stage a lasting obsession with his Italian Jewish "milk" cousin. They meet in the Venice of 1939, described in a breathless list of clichés, undercut with a certain self-consciousness: "If it weren't stupendous, it would be kitsch", observes Sammy of the "pearl of the Adriatic". Sammy, the scruffy, uncouth son of a maddeningly typical couple - typical New York Jewish: typical tastes, typical parents: loud, garish and affectionate - is naturally self-conscious, alienated and inferior. He develops a complex the moment he sees Alvis. Alvis is a cliché of another kind: European, aristocratic, cultured; not only does he play the violin but he plays it well. Their meeting, in the "Falloidum" - built Villa Ombreggiata takes place before a painting of Salome, whose story Alvis is obliged to explain to Sammy. That story casts its shadow throughout the novel, which follows Sammy's increasing obsession with Alvis, until he ends up doing a kind of embarrassed seven veils shuffle before his intractably sympathetic, unembarrassed superior.

The story starts and ends with dashes.

across war-ravaged parts of the world; Europe in the 1940s where Alvis persistently saves the life of the grumbling, twenty Sammy; and the Middle East forty years later where he nonchalantly saves his own life from Sammy's persistent attempts at assassination. Sammy, the ineffectually inferior, has resorted to "assassination" because by this time he is merely the Number One World Best Seller Thriller writer, whereas the seraphic Alvis has won the Nobel Prize for a slim volume.

In between these encounters there's a glimpse of the everyday life of not very ordinary, but conscientiously typical people in New York. Sammy's successful world, with his Ferrari, his Gucci shoes and his "wifey" mink, is soon ravaged by a chance reunion with his childhood saviour, who he thought had been successfully ditched at the repatriation after the war. Alvis is now a sleek politician as well as literary figure, a cerebral negotiator for world peace who has made, inherited and relinquished several fortunes. And he has a stunning wife. Sammy tries a bit of gymnastic revenge on her but discovers that she and Alvis have one of those special understandings. Adultery just won't be good enough, even with the help of the Kama Sutra and some Japanese prints. Sammy's education must include the lesson that "to have is not to be".

There are some comic scenes as, for the rest of the novel, Sammy tries to become his own ideal villain. Trailing round the world on one of Alvis's peace missions, he fails to perform a series of perfect murders. Unfortun-

On and off the rails

Nicholas Shakespeare

LISA ST AUBIN DE TERÁN

The Slow Train to Milan
254pp. Jonathan Cape. £7.95.
0 224 02777 3

On the surface, Lisa St Aubin de Terán's second novel is as autobiographical as her first. In *Keepers of the House*, a young English girl, married to "an unusually silent" Venezuelan, chronicles his family's decline in the Andes. Like his forefathers, he was "a great rare fish washed ashore, whose lungs had been unable to adapt to the twentieth century". There are few similar images in *The Slow Train to Milan*, in which an even younger narrator tells how she met her exiled husband and spent two years travelling with him through Europe, before sailing for his avocado plantations. It is an altogether tamer novel, without the wars and pestilence, the madness and legends which made *Keepers of the House* such a success.

Lisaveta is a shy, gauche schoolgirl of sixteen. When she returns from shopping one weekend a total stranger blocks the path to her door with the words, "South America". At thirty-five, César resembles a distinctly debauched fifty-year old. He has spent two years in prison for terrorist offences, and has dark rings under his eyes and a passion for pork and Napoleon. And this comes out gradually, for César is a man of few words, none of them English. Three days after installing himself in her flat, he asks Lisaveta to marry him. When she threatens to leave, he is sick. (It was the pork, he says). She complies, with a remarkable lack of curiosity, "simply because he was there". Only at the Lambeth Registry Office does she discover he is a landowner. "My family is of the elite... for hundreds of years we have ruled Venezuela, I am almost the last of the line, they don't shoot people like me."

César has two exiled friends who are equally restless and broody. Otto, "one of the most brilliant men I have ever met", enjoys a turbulent affair in Oxford with a scorching mistress, who "dressed in a certain way when she was hellbent on revenge". Like César, Otto, is on the run, but Elias, who "eludes all description" - apart from his similarity to a Mayan sculpture - is

wanted dead rather than alive. "I didn't know exactly what my three friends did", admits Lisaveta, having smuggled a pistol for them to Paris, "but it was pretty sure it was illegal." It certainly was. "We rob banks", César reveals in a moment of garrulity. Lisaveta's detachment is as ingenious and equivocal as her reason for accompanying the three men on a train to Milan. "I was just there for the ride", she explains. "My feelings were volatile, I wanted to travel. I didn't want much else... There were only two certainties in my life, two loves: wearing long dresses and moving on."

On she moves with her proud companions "from Paris to Milan and back, and sometimes to Bologna". It is an aimless journey in the company of men who are alert to undefined threats but inert while waiting for them to materialize. Blunted by a lack of violence, they emerge as South Americans who have not travelled very well, a little fuzzy round the edges. Their journey takes Lisaveta, innocent and uncomplicated, from privation and penury in squalid tenements to the sudden luxury of a Ravenna palazzo.

All the time she is mistaken for her husband's daughter. Once, when the only room they can find is in a brothel, the owner exclaims they are the first married couple he has ever had staying. "A real hotel, mamma, a real

hotel", he says clasping his hands. Next day they find freemasons in their room.

Because there is no destination - no real story - such incidents become the dramatic links which carry the narrative forward. They are unrelated and fragmented as the characters themselves. César appears to have a magical effect on everyone he meets, despite an endemic compulsion to pinch everything in sight, from a silver chalice to the visitor's book at the Vatican Museum. "Everywhere he went, he was treated like a listed building. No one could resist his indifference" - no one, that is, except the reader. Granted that every word across in a jerky, dislocated fashion. At one point, quite out of the blue, we discover he is addicted to aspirins. At another, that he loathes cyclists and Frenchmen. At the end, when he decides to pull the communal curtain over his drifting existence, he is more enigmatic and no less threatening than when he first appeared on the doorstep.

Nothing much happens in *The Slow Train to Milan*. For all the vividness and consistency of the writing, it is more a series of brilliant vignettes than a comprehensive novel; a band of multi-coloured worry-beads rather than a rosary.

Bound to please

Savkar Altinel

EMILY PRAGER

A Visit from the Footblinder and other stories
174pp. Chatto and Windus. £7.95 (paperback, £3.50).
0 7011 2675 2

Although described on its dust-jacket as "dispatches from the front line" where "provoked women and provocative men meet", this collection of stories is more like the jottings of a mercenary determined to keep out of the fighting and prosper by serving both sides. A contributor at once to *Ms* and *Penhouse*, Emily Prager writes with a keen awareness that there is more than one market to exploit, and the results of her efforts to be all things to all persons are rich with ambiguity.

In the title story, set in China in the thirteenth century, foot-binding serves as an emblem of female bondage. This is familiar territory, and the message seems reassuringly simple and straightforward. What is less reassuring, however, is the way in which the story unnecessarily dwells on the details of the process, gradually building up to a climax in which a girl bound to a chair with leather thongs has her toes painfully bent into place by a leering Buddhist nio with a shaven head and a round body like a "carved ivory ball". Despite the jokiness of the tone, there is no disguising the intention of the writing to titillate.

The same also goes for the novella-length "The Lincoln-Fruit Anti-Rape Device" in which a group of American women fitted with a castrating gadget are sent into the jungles of South-east Asia in search of unsuspecting Vietcong men. Once again the point is clear: no matter how intelligent,

sophisticated and self-assured she may be, a woman will not be completely free as long as she has to live with the fear of sexual assault. Unfortunately, this cannot be underlined without the women baring their breasts, massaging each other with oils, painting dark spots on their bodies, and performing other acts supposedly designed to lure the enemy. Even worse is the description of the Major in charge of the operation:

For one thing the woman had style. In addition to a well-tailored beige Army tunic and jodhpurs, the Major always wore a highly-polished sea-brown belt, brown pumps with four-inch heels, and skin-tight chocolate-brown tights. A glove that buttoned at the wrist. A beige envelope cap sat jauntily on her bouffant chestnut hair, and her backbone was rounded straight...

The story is ultimately as asinine as pandoring to male fantasies as it is supporting the cause of liberation.

The three remaining stories are slight. Although one shows *Ms* Kosinski confronted by three women wearing eight-inch dildoes who, to everyone else, want to know if he really wrote *The Painted Bird*, and another offers a glimpse of Russell Baker's elevator, they are remarkable only because of their ability to yield the clichés of feminist propaganda to the clichés of soft porn, dressing their heretical tight skirts and "very high heels" in having them tied to beds and flagellated. Interestingly, at one point we meet an anticipated woman critic, Edda who writes compulsion to pay a middle-aged English charity man, Mrs Bainbridge to pretend to be the author of her books. Compulsion incongruity bothers Ms Prager much less, and she is happy to play both parts herself.

JOHN HUTTON

Accidental Crimes
252pp. Bodley Head. £7.50.
0 370 34098 5

It's an unfortunate accident that Conrad, lecturer in a college of education, should be on or near the scene not once, but twice. After the raped and mutilated body of a girl has been discovered on the moor. The first time his questioning by the police is routine, but they begin to get enthusiastic the second time round. Envious of the shabby little secrets and evasions begin to emerge: his marriage starts to fall apart, and his job crumbles before him. A clinically neat, cruelly brilliant dissection of a self-important, self-satisfied personality: to wit, mine, cut it. In the end, refuse a twinge of sympathy.

LAURENCE MEYNELL

Silver Gull
190pp. Macmillan. £6.50.
0 333 34315 8

"All lights turn green for Elworthy" is the motto of provincial journalism, and Elworthy, But he rides his luck to the far, gets into a financial jam, and turns to amateur burglary. Miranda, daughter of a retired general, pulls him out of the soup and acquires a million in life.

Silver Gull is an amusing, well-written, unpretentious novel - a professional piece of work - and its author who has been turning out novels since 1924.

T. J. B.

FICTION

Cybernetic sentimentality

Colin Greenland

STANISLAW LEM

More Tales of Pirx the Pilot
Corgi, Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
£10 24411 X

ROBERT SILVERBERG

Survive on Mercury
Corgi, Gollancz. £7.95.
0 575 03217 0

Stanislaw Lem's earlier tales of Pirx, about his development from a budding cadet, the class dummy, to an experienced prowess as a sort of space detective, whose strength is his intuition rather than his intellect. This second volume presents a Pirx who has become mentally and physically confident and capable of swift and accurate responses: in five stories he battles only once, and finds himself before the Cosmic Tribunal for the examination, his hesitation proves to be profoundly moral and efficient, and he is acquitted. It seems that Pirx has reached perfection of work rather than life. In the process he has become almost characterless, pure function, with no inner life at all. Lem's attempt to give him a social persona consists of making him express himself in jargonisms which sound, in translation at least, as stilted as anyone trying to be casual. It is significant that his success during training was in the sensory deprivation tank rather than anyone else. Now even Pirx dreams turn out to be contributions to his investigations.

It is entirely appropriate that one of his missions is to work with a team of indistinguishable, like Isaac Asimov's "postronic robots", from whom, until crisis forces them to break cover and reveal their technical superiority. Unlike Asimov, however, Lem is concerned with the existential dimensions of the encounter. Pirx, a man who has been mechanized, is asked to judge "the imperfect imitation of machines into men". His philosophical discussions, some between Pirx and a robot - or is it actually one of the control group pretending to be a robot? Lem signals his awareness of the ironies with a heavy little joke or two. A company employee tells Pirx, "I'm just a tiny cog

in the Nortronics machine." A receptionist, her high heels "like tiny metal stilts", is described as "a platinum blonde".

Testing robots and humans at work together, Pirx wonders whether he ought to "penalize the robots for not being human", but can he do anything else? In another story, "Ananke", Pirx sits on the committee of inquiry into a spaceship crash caused by a computer which could not cope with a landing because it was over-programmed. Glutted with in-coming information, it could not make a decision and tried to run away from the planet. This is a machine which pays the penalty for being too human. Lem is careful to justify this analogy in cybernetic terms, but in two other stories, "The Accident" and "The Hunt", he has Pirx chase two robots which have erred for less specific reasons, though with very specific results: one falls off a mountain and is not instructed to climb, and the other starts carving up a lunar colony with its mining laser. Here it becomes apparent that Lem is complementing his practice of dehumanizing people by romanticizing robots whose self-awareness easily generates a literary pathos. Alas, the inhuman condition. (This pathos is also traditional, stretching from Mary Shelley's glum golem through Asimov's little lost robots, Philip K. Dick's dreaming androids, and John Sladek's hapless learning machine, Roderick, the way down to Douglas Adams and Marvin the metal melancholic.)

Cybernetic sentimentality apart, the galaxy where Pirx lives and works is a thoroughly unromantic, unsensational place. "People on Earth can't imagine what a pain the stars are - what a drag it is to cruise the cosmos, even for a year at full thrust, with never a change of scenery!" The Moon is spartan and boring, Mars is grey and gritty, there is no alien life anywhere and a pilot's toughest task is steering through the "regs", the inflexible law and bureaucracy of international space administration: that "surrounds... him. (It is always a him: there are few women in Lem's futures). What's more, by the time he's experienced enough to know how to do it, he's too old to fly, and against that decision there is no appeal. The universal harshness of the conditions give a further reason for Pirx's iron soul.

For relaxation, Pirx reads "sci-fi, the

corny, easy-to-read stuff, where everything the cosmos allowed, is so tame". Robert Silverberg's new collection *Survive on Mercury* would fit Pirx's bookshelf well enough. It is a new collection only in the sense that these particular thirteen stories have not appeared together in one volume before. One is from 1974 and one from 1969; all the others were first published before 1959. The date is significant in Silverberg's inhumanly prolific career: 1958 marked the end of his first period, that of what he himself calls "high-volume hackmanship". This was the Silverberg who regularly supplied all the available pulp magazines with material to order: "If an editor needed 7,500-word story of alien conquest in three days to balance an issue about to go to press, he need only phone me and I would produce it." The stories in *Survive on Mercury* are perhaps some of the less negligible relics of that period; they are not badly written as such. But they are uniformly bland, tossed off with the facility of an intelligent writer earning an easy dollar by spinning out a single idea (or not even as much) to a specified length. The most vivid are "The Silent Colony", which features intelligent snowflakes, and "Why?", in which a space explorer, veteran of a hundred and sixty-four planets, suddenly wonders why he bothers. The most offensive, on the other hand, is "Precedent", a gleeful story of a vicious and violent confidence trick played on an alien race by the Commander of a Terran Cultural and Military Mission. It even carries a moral of man xenophobia: "If aliens demand equality with Earthmen, give 'em all the equality they can stand. Give it to 'em till it hurts!"

In his middle period Silverberg surprised his audience and altogether redeemed his reputation by writing a large number of original and imaginatively challenging novels and stories, including *The Man in the Maze* and *Dying Inside*. His most recent work, mellifluous fairytales published amid gales of hyperbole and demonstrating a thorough contempt for their readership, have already done much to obscure what he achieved in the seventies. By reissuing his journeyman efforts as if they were "vintage stories" Gollancz are abetting Silverberg's decline, and doing a disservice to the new readers who will be most likely to pick up this volume.

An alpha's omega

Roz Kaveney

FRANK HERBERT

The White Plague
445pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0 575 03240 5

In his novels Frank Herbert presents habitually glowing visions of social and biological evolution. Many people, however, would rather die than experience the horrors which he thinks necessary for such human development. Much American science fiction is deeply authoritarian in its general outlook and prescriptions, but oddly mealy-mouthed about details; Herbert, by contrast, enthusiastically describes the bloody strategies by which the alpha male preserves and, where possible, improves his genes. In *The White Plague* he applies his usual drastic remedies to the present, just in case his readers had kidded themselves that his message only applies to the inhabitants of his imaginary distant futures.

The Provisional IRA blow up the family of an American biologist called O'Neill who goes mad and cooks up a plague fatal to human females in his bathtub. He intends it as a punishment for Elre, Great Britain and Libya but it spreads and, demented, he wanders an Ireland reverted to barbarism. Then scientists not only find the cure, but also discover the secret of longevity. Things will never be the same - women will have to concentrate on breeding, polyandry will become the norm and scientists will be forced to participate in the ruling elite if they want to avoid enslavement and universal

catastrophe. All the things of which Herbert disapproves - democracy, feminism - disappear of necessity; by the end of the book the enlightened are quickly regarding O'Neill as a benefactor.

As narrative technique Herbert adopts, ill-advisedly, a kaleidoscopic switching of viewpoints; this bid for a broad canvas shows up the silliness of some of this thought in a way concentration on a few characters might not have. The emotional impact of the death of half the human race is diminished somewhat by the fact we never get to know any of them except for an Irish nunny. The only women who survive are those preserved by men in laboratories or seragios.

The multiplicity of viewpoints means that we never really get a chance to know any of Herbert's characters as much more than names; even the priest, terrorist and silent boy who accompany O'Neill in his Celtic twilight wanderings stay largely symbols. Herbert tries hard to make O'Neill comprehensible but never solves the paradox implicit in the myth of the Mad Scientist - if he is that mad, how can he be so competent? If he causes so much pain how can we care for his tragedy? He comes closest to resolving these problems in a macabre kangaroo court trial scene, but significantly can only end it by having a mob come through the door with a pitchfork. Just as the *Dune* books were at their best, and won their large audience, when the young prophet was scuttling away from his enemies through the sand, *The White Plague* is only really satisfactory when O'Neill is wandering silently through the devastation of Ireland.

An old Ham

Lewis Jones

STEPHEN MINOT

Surviving the Flood
304pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0 575 03237 5

In Stephen Minot's *Surviving the Flood* Ham is now 900 years old and "the only surviving witness" of the Flood. In what he calls the "Official Report" he is said to have been Noah's second son, to have taken with him a wife into the ark and to have committed some sort of indecency on his father when the old man was drunk, for which his offspring were to be the servants of servants. He says, however, that he was the third son and an antediluvian bachelor, and that what sounds like a curse was in fact a kind of blessing. The Official Report is a conspiracy, "a terrible cover-up". Minot has followed the example of novelists like John Galsworthy and Robert Nye; in a self-consciously low style and with considerable gusto and ingenuity he has turned his chosen myth on its head.

Ham remembers himself to have been a sensitive and idealistic youth, greatly shocked by a cruel and arbitrary state of affairs. At the end of the first chapter, when the ark is beginning to float, he watches his father chop off the hands and arms of their neighbours as they try to scramble on board; when he looks out he is confronted by "a sea of reproachful corpses". He wonders why Jahweh has chosen his family: Noah, for all his admirable energy, is a tyrant and a hypocrite; Shem, the eldest son, is an unimaginative lout; and Japheth is an indolent drunkard. The only people with whom Ham has anything in common are those whom the Official Report ignores: Methuselah, the family patriarch, who occupies the uppermost deck, and the servants down below. Methuselah is a jolly lecherous figure and is heading the end of his life. On his death-bed he scandalizes the family by explaining that they are descended from Cain, rather than from Seth, and by naming Ham as his heir, with his last words he exhorts "his great-grandson to overcome his distasteful ancestry by pursuing 'warm values'". As it happens, Ham has already

found such values in the person of a servant called Sapphira; but Cain casts a long shadow. Sapphira is the property of Shem, and the two brothers fight over her bitterly. Their quarrel is ended, though, when the ark begins to sink. The survivors, the day and are rewarded with callous ingratitude. They rebel, and Ham finds himself supporting their cause, but deploring their methods. This crisis is in its turn resolved by the subsidence of the waters and the discovery of bedraggled survivors outside, whom Noah sets about colonizing. Ham marries Sapphira and, after a singularly traumatic wedding-night, they go off to found Sodom, Gomorah and Babylon.

Minot's characters are too obviously programmed and their plausibility is further impaired by their crudely anachronistic opinions. The servant's revolt presents a challenge to Ham's "rosy liberalism"; disgusted by the custom of sacrifice he wonders "if perhaps it were his creatures here below who were taking pleasure in the slaughter for if we did not, wouldn't we have declared our Maker a vegetarian?" The plot, too, is over-deliberate. *Surviving the Flood* is nevertheless an effective entertainment; and it is beautifully illustrated with woodcuts and engravings of the ark and its passengers.

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Emerging slowly

Alan Sked

ANDREW C. JANOS

The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945
370pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £19.30 (paperback, £8.90). 0 691 07633 2

This is not a history book but a piece of sociology based on the assumption that "during the period under consideration" Hungary was not a "western" but a "backward country" located on the periphery of the world system and incurring under the same material and psychological handicaps as are today's "emerging nations" in the so-called Third World. Andrew C. Janos hopes that it will enable him to look for analogies and more ambitiously to develop a generalized concept of peripheral politics. This reviewer would advise him to abandon the attempt.

Janos is without doubt a scholar of great erudition but his study - which concludes that late industrialization is the determining force in Hungarian history - is undermined by all sorts of objections. For a start it seems suspiciously circular in so far as it proves merely what it states; second, it is based on a number of fundamental misconceptions about European and world history; third, it wildly overstates its case at a number of key points; fourth, it obscures the real determining forces in Hungarian history during this period - a parliamentary tradition, liberal ideas, the existence of the nationalities, the constitutional links with Austria, the proximity of Russia and Germany. While, finally, it is in many ways unfair. That is to say, Janos consistently accuses the Hungarians of being backward on account of policies which are patently "progressive". But let us

examine some of these objections in more detail.

Regarding Janos's views on European and world history, it would seem that he generalizes to a point which is almost meaningless. What for example is "the western historical experience"? For that matter what is the "West"? What is the "core" and what is the "periphery"? What is the "Third World"? Does it - the whole of it - share a common "experience" too? Does Hungary really have more in common historically with Ethiopia than Great Britain? Janos's book raises all his concepts of a "western historical experience". In the period covered by the book this was hardly the same for most European countries. Germany and Italy had to undergo wars of unification; France had intermittent revolutions, so that while Britain consolidated her parliamentary system of government the French experienced revolutionary dictatorships, moderate republicanism, constitutional monarchy, imperial despotism, republican democracy and Vichy. Despite this variety, the régimes which emerged in Germany, with the brief exception of Weimar, were of a different character still. Thus we can dispense, I think, with the notion of a common "western political experience".

Janos might object, however, that he has really been referring to the economic history of the "core" of the West. For at least two points in his book (p169 and p243) he appears to narrow his definition of the West quite considerably. Here apparently it includes neither Germany nor Italy nor even most of France. But even these two references contradict each other for p169 includes West Germany while p243 excludes it. Similarly p169 excludes most of France while p243 includes it. Yet it is rather important to know whether "the West" includes the whole of France and Germany or not. Perhaps Janos is surreptitiously attempting to answer another

objection to his thesis, namely that even within states regional variations render meaningless any attempts to lump them into universal categories of backward and developed nations. For example, can the United Kingdom be taken to include Ireland for Janos's purposes? Can Inverness be said to have been "developed" in 1914 and Budapest and Berlin "underdeveloped"? Clearly there is a difficulty here. However, Janos's way of resolving it - by limiting his "core" to England, West Germany, Northern France and the Low Countries - is merely tautological. It is hardly an intellectual revelation to be told that industrialized areas are different from unindustrialized areas because the latter have no industry.

Regarding Hungary itself, Janos drives his argument too hard. To say that there was a "progressive narrowing of political régimes" is misleading. The Dualist system was much more liberal than the Metternich or Bach régimes while the Horthy régime between the wars was more liberal than the Dualist one. In fact it is nonsensical to try to paint the political history of Hungary in the colours of some Latin American banana republic or Third World dictatorship. All Janos's evidence suggests that Hungary's rulers were committed to a parliamentary system under the rule of law and that for most of the time the franchise in Hungary was no more restricted than in the rest of Europe. Thus under Dualism, we are told the courts were free, the press was free and (outside areas inhabited by the "nationalities" whose loyalty to the state was in doubt - cf Ireland in British history) elections were free. Prime ministers who did not consult their back-benchers lost power; the Hlg Court freed one deputy who tried to shoot one prime minister and backed another who had accused the political promoter of fraud. The same court regularly overturned disputed election results in government constituencies.

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Meanwhile, newspapers flourished everywhere, including socialist ones which used terms such as "pigs" and "criminals" of ministers who were passing laws on social security and workers rights as progressive as any in Europe. These same ministers were also pursuing a policy of industrialization which was to give Hungary from the 1880s a growth-rate on average of over 6 per cent per annum. Most of these policies and freedoms, it should be added, were retained between the wars. Right up to March 1944, Janos acknowledges, Hungary enjoyed an effective opposition and a free press - and, of course, did much more to save its Jewish population than the more "advanced" French and Germans. Thus it is difficult to accept Hungary's "backwardness".

Janos, finally, vitally underestimates the true motives for Hungarian history. Adherence to a parliamentary tradition frustrated both Metternich and Franz Joseph, just as it did the more authoritarian tendencies of the Tiszas, Gömbös and Imrédy. Domination by foreign powers - particularly Austria - shaped not

merely Hungarian politics before 1944 and after 1957 but also economic and defence policies. Foreign intervention by Romania in 1919, by Germany in 1944 and by Russia in 1948 and 1957. But it is the role of the nationalities most of all which cannot be underestimated. For it was the nationality problem which divided the "nation" in 1848-49. It was the nationality problem which was the root of the Tisza system - all the government's "safe" seats were in the Slovak and Romanian counties. It was the nationality problem once again which encouraged the Magyar to protect the Jews (assimilated Jews sustained the Magyar majority); while last but not least it was the nationality problem which led to the First World War and the end of Greater Hungary. I do not doubt that economic backwardness also had a part to play in shaping Hungarian history, but to argue - as Janos does - that it alone determined that history does not seem to be supported by the facts. Historical backwardness, if it exists, cannot explain the history of Hungary, far less that of the whole Third World.

Corruption and creation

Virgil Nemoianu

ALEXANDRE CIORANESCU

Ion Barbu

155pp. Boston: Twayne.

In the last few years before his death, Ion Barbu was a daunting figure: a large frame bent over a gnarled walking stick, a drooping white moustache and flowing mane behind an Olympian brow, a huge turn-of-the-century bow-tie, a sad, opaque gaze. By this time, he had become a living legend. In the Stalinist 1950s in Romania he had refused to publish anything except for a fragmentary, tortured and icy translation of *Richard III*, but had instead withdrawn into his other career as a mathematician. Barbu had obtained his doctorate in mathematics in 1924 with a dissertation on "The Canonic Representation of the Addition of Hyperelliptic Functions", having studied at Göttingen, Tübingen and Bucharest, and in 1941 he became a full professor of algebra at the University of Bucharest. He lectured at many European universities and his papers and textbooks in various branches of mathematics won him what I assume as a non-mathematician, was a well deserved reputation. His scientific work always appeared, however, under the name of Dan Barbilan. Barbu was his poetic name, which earned him a quite separate renown.

This second personality was also that of a robust and tireless womanizer (a "principe vald" his friends called him) and of a lusty Bohemian and a haughty iconoclast. The sum total of his published poetry amounts to some 3,000 lines, virtually all of which were written in the 1920s. His masters were Moreau, Valéry and Mallarmé, as well as Poe and Coleridge, and he astonished his readers with a blend of dense baroque and formal perfection. His poems are among the most difficult ever written in Romanian. Yet his was not the abstract, free association technique practised by the Surrealists and Dadaists. Barbu sought to reach down to a depth where mystical and mathematical symbols could cooperate and invoke the seething Dionysian core of Being through its contrary: cold, polyhedral forms. The several cycles of his lyrical verse which explore this area, notably "The Dogmatic Egg", are generally considered as the foundation on which his poetic reputation must rest.

The great merit of Alexandre Cioranescu's monograph is that it encompasses equally other sides of Barbu's work. Cioranescu is a specialist in Comparative Literature and Romance Philology (he taught for many years at the University of Laguna in the Canaries) and, accordingly, his outlook is broad. He is aware that Barbu's earliest poetry is transitional and tentative, lightly imitating

Parnassian and Symbolist models. It is particularly strong in showing the Nietzschean premises of much of Barbu's vision, particularly in terms of the tension between the will to form and anarchic creativity.

But useful as these indications may be, the chief merits of Cioranescu's study lie elsewhere. He explains how although Barbu's poems may seem so abstract and hermetic, they do have a historical underpinning, albeit a somewhat fantastical one. One of his recurring motifs is the town of Iasi, the colourful and corrupt town where he grew up, and the ruins of ancient Iasi, a city of extraordinary splendour, both corrupt and creative where a motley crew of sly judges, prostitutes and cynical merchants are heirs to a world beneath which the perfect geometry of an ideal civilization can still be vaguely perceived or remembered. The motif of Iasi is "halfway between Evil and Good", an archaeological stratum full of the refuse of false civilizations, as picturesque as it is malodorous.

Cioranescu also dwells on modern cycle of lyric poems in which small and other gasteropods abound. Barbu described these in a famous line: "super-sexual and super-musical". Their presence suggests a writing teaming world from which must be reason are absent and which must be closer to absolute lyricism. In these others of his poems Barbu abandons regular metres in favour of free verse.

Barbu was more of free verse. Barbu's neo-Parnassianism, as suggested in his occasional essays as well as in some of the poems themselves, that "mathematical" poems with "magic" of words, can constitute a "secondary game" (this is the same of one of his finest sense of poems), but that though it may be secondary, its comparison with an immediate palpable reality, this "game" can give us a vision of an unshuffled truth.

His long and slender silhouette is lost during the last thirty years of his life (he died in 1961) has something symbolic about it, historically speaking. Barbu offered a sophisticated, intelligent, demanding version of some of the deepest themes in Romanian culture: a search for an aesthetic idealism, a yearning for Paradise, a resentment against history, a ferocious innocence. But Barbu was too subtle a mind not to realize that his culture predicated upon "mathematical" poems with "magic" of words, can constitute a "secondary game" (this is the same of one of his finest sense of poems), but that though it may be secondary, its comparison with an immediate palpable reality, this "game" can give us a vision of an unshuffled truth.

IRELAND

The selective eye

The Knight of Glin

MAURICE CRAIG

The Architecture of Ireland: From the earliest times to 1880
280pp. with black-and-white illustrations. Batsford. £20. 0 7134 2386 5

As a youth in Belfast Maurice Craig got to know the prehistoric remains of County Down, and a high point of his school days occurred when he forced his reluctant father to take him on an expedition to the early Christian remains on Downside island on Lough Enne. Luckily for the young Craig his father provided him with an allowance which meant that from about 1945 to about 1952 he was free to research and write his biography of Lord Charlemont, the Volunteer Earl and his cousin Dublin 1660-1860.

That first book, with its detailed investigation of Charlemont's superb neo-classical templehouse, the Casino at Marino near Dublin, led him easily into the investigation of - the background and buildings of Dublin itself. In those days architectural historians, with the exception of John Summerson, were not often concerned with social history but much of the writing is inspired by his interest in the use of buildings and their relationship to the humans that live in them. The Dublin book secured its author his first job as an inspector in the Ancient Monument section of what was then England's Ministry of Works, where he became known for his idiosyncratic written reports of official visits to English country houses. His wry sarcasm on the owners of the houses was skilfully entwined in his architectural commentary on the buildings themselves.

It was this same interest that brought

Craig back to Ireland, when he was asked by the then Minister of Finance, Charles J. Haughey, to prepare a report on the plight of Irish country houses for An Taisce, the Irish National Trust, in 1970. It is a sad comment on Ireland today that little has been done to blow the dust off this report since it was written, and the future of the few remaining heritage houses now looks bleak indeed. But Craig's return has been Ireland's gain: he has been able to resume his lifelong preoccupation with all kinds of Irish buildings, and a distillation of this varied field-work, done in close cooperation with a number of younger scholars, has culminated in *The Architecture of Ireland: From the Earlier Times to 1880*.

It must have been a considerable challenge to write so skilfully about dolmens and early Christian churches; then to ring the changes through medieval abbeys and castles, seventeenth-century strong-houses, classic eighteenth-century mansions, Catholic emancipation churches, and the maze of Victorian revivals. Craig also explores mausolea, bridges, lighthouses, greenhouses, and many types of public buildings - Irish court-houses, for example, are especially well treated.

The author admits in his preface that he has only dealt briefly with the early Christian and medieval periods since, with the exception of castles, they have already been so well covered by late Harold Leask. Irish castles and tower-houses still cry out for scholarly investigation, however. Craig justifies his lengthy discussion of the seventeenth century and of the architectural transition from medieval to modern times because so little study has been done on this rather inhospitable period. Catholic church building between 1760 and 1840 is given a new focus. It is tragic to see what vandalism has been perpetrated on so many Irish Catholic churches for the sake of "doctrine" and "progress".

The Anglo-Norman period left little record of Belfast's inhabitants save the ravages of their feuding lords. Those lords, however, saw one asset in the place - it afforded a site with good supplies, suitable ground, transport and services for a fortified and corporate planters' town. With that incorporation in 1603 the history of Belfast really begins.

Despite the town's strategic importance and one brief siege in the Civil War, Belfast was peculiarly fortunate in the seventeenth century in that it suffered neither massacre nor destruction but prospered with the movement of troops and supplies. It became the most flourishing port in the north of the island: within it cornmills, tanneries, two forges, a tuck mill and a printing press; around it houses with little gardens and orchards, a deer park, and a wide lough which held safe the sailing ships at anchor.

At the same time the Presbyterianism of its Scottish settlers won recognition and then, under William III, a brief tolerance which allowed their particular tradition to survive and to strengthen into dissenting radicalism under the less tolerant eighteenth-century episcopalianism. By the end of the century for some of the 20,000 inhabitants radicalism had turned to sedition. Barbu's account of the cultural, educational, philosophical, economic and political background of these middle-class United Irishmen is excellent. Fortunately in his sources for this period he re-creates the desperation of the Hearts of Steel - "bewildered landlord and rector, the very marrow is screwed out of our bones" - as readily as the genteel and Gallic-bourgeois atmosphere of the Harp Society. One is drawn to compare this "immigrant" and emigrating society, this town of the Enlightenment, with its counterparts in Great Britain and the colonies.

Enlightenment became urban reform in the nineteenth century: radicalism turned to industrial expediency, and immigration brought

by many an ignorant, vainglorious parish priest. Interior decoration is entirely omitted, and vernacular buildings find almost no place in the book.

The whole is inevitably rather uneven. The eighteenth century, ranging from Sir William Robinson's Kilmahlinn Hospital, down to James Gandon's Custom House, is a model of clarity and joy to read; the nineteenth century, with its sheer volume and variety of buildings, seems almost to crush Craig under heavy detail of carved crocket and parabolic vault. This section is broken up into a series of short summaries, which will doubtless lay the foundations for many a future scholar's enthusiasm; an enthusiasm that Craig clearly does not share. But enthusiasm and eloquence are plentiful elsewhere in the book, and he frequently makes a point of peopling his stage. When writing about Downhill, County Derry, he comments that its siting "can only be described as Ossianic: on top of a cliff facing North across the Atlantic towards the Outer Hebrides where only a romantic would expect to find a house, and only a lunatic would build one. The Earl-Bishop [of Derry] qualifies on both counts".

This book should make clear to visitors to Ireland that there is much of architectural interest to be seen there: it is not a rural country consisting only of lugubrious cement and shabby garages. Maurice Craig repeats the old adage that "to live in England you have to be deaf, whereas in Ireland the advantage is to be blind", but he exhorts us to disregard what is actually to be seen and to dwell only on what is worth seeing. His intention succeeds admirably. One can only wish that his publishers had treated his text with more generosity. The book is badly designed, and a curious reversal of the margins - narrow on the outside and wide on the inside - small type, frequently unevenly grey photographs, all give an unappealing impression.

How necessary affection is for an urban historian appears from the section on the twentieth century, when the story of half-a-million people seems at times to offer little more than tears. Here Barbu is at his best. He sinks at times under the weight of his material, especially in his account of the story past the desperate measures of the Wilson Plan for the economy in 1964 and the Civil Rights of 1968 to the plight of the present.

Has Barbu any hope for the future? Strangely, some. If the riots of 1986 spilled more blood than the Land Wars, the faces of the last fourteen years have been less than those of Belfast for the single summer of 1982. If Belfast has lost its industrial heart, perhaps beyond recall, it is not alone in this changing world. This is scarcely a ground on which to go forward, but Barbu is a historian who cannot finally despair of the vitality of his fellow-citizens. While the book will long remain a significant account of Belfast's history, it may remain for ever longer a testimony to the spirit of Belfastmen.

"I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world," wrote James Joyce to a London publisher in 1905. Benedict Kiely in his compilation *Dublin* (112pp. Oxford University Press: £4.50, 0 19 21424 4) does present Dublin through a whole range of writers including, of course, the author of *Ulysses*, the greatest of all literary works centred on the city. He takes us on a journey round the suburbs and into the city centre, introducing us to such figures as Swift, Bernard Shaw, George Moore, Brendan Behan, Yeats, the MacDonaghs, Flann O'Brien and many more.

The prime cause of Green's popularity and influence was his originality, and it is the measure of his achievement that we are now in danger of forgetting this. He reconstructed in a single volume the development of a nation, taking cognizance not only of the political but also of the social, the cultural and the religious aspects of its life. His whole method was startlingly novel when he wrote, and it may be

Fifty years on: John Richard Green

The TLS of March 9, 1933, carried the following essay on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of John Richard Green, author of the Short History of the English People:

The place of John Richard Green in English history and literature depends upon one book. It is as the author of the "Short History of the English People" that he impressed his personality upon his contemporaries, and it is through that book that he has exercised his immense posthumous influence. His instantaneous success was comparable among historical books only to the work of Macaulay. Within a year 32,000 copies of the work had been sold; and by 1909 it had been translated into French, German, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Chinese. To-day it is still the most widely read single-volume history of England. Green's quite special place among the historians of England does not depend upon reviews or upon antiquated works of research. It is due to a single masterpiece.

But when a modern critic takes up this historical text-book which, unlike its fellows, has thus miraculously escaped the melancholy oblivion of schoolroom shelves, he is at first at a loss to account for its immediate success and its far-reaching influence.

It bears the superficial appearance not only of a mere student's manual, but of a manual written unmistakably at a particular period to give expression to transitory and often erroneous ideas. And yet this is the book which has enjoyed the initial popularity of a successful novel and the long life of a monument of research. Nor does a preliminary perusal of its contents dispel the feeling of perplexity. The defects in the book were indeed immediately apparent to Green's contemporaries, and time has done little to lessen them. Here can certainly be heard the echo of moribund enthusiasms; and the political ideas of fifty years ago seem to resound strangely from a remote past. "This is a history not of English kings or English conquests but of the English people." He finds it very hard to say anything good of royalty. Nothing is for him "more revolting" and yet nothing is "more characteristic" of Elizabeth "than her shameless mendacity." For James I. we have "gabble androdomontade," "want of personal dignity," "pedantry" and "contemptible cowardice." George III. "had a smaller mind than any other English king before him sustained." (an astonishing hyperbole) "the shame of the darkest hour of English history," he would be directly responsible. Even Alfred can be quaintly cited as an enemy of democracy, while Henry I. was "jealously aloof," and Henry II. "built up by patience and policy and craft a domination alien to the deepest sympathies of his age." Every one of these judgments could now be confidently disputed. Their presence in the "Short History" unmistakably "dates" a book which nevertheless continues to exercise its immense influence. Both over professional historians and over the general English public.

Green's work was in the highest degree serious and sincere, even though he had a tendency to dramatize every event of which he wrote. This quality indeed appeared in his conversation, which, many of his friends declared, was even more remarkable than his written work. In talk he could not tell an anecdote or repeat a conversation without unconsciously putting into people's mouths better phrases than they would have themselves employed and giving a finer point to the moral which the incident expressed. Verbal accuracy might suffer, but what he thought was the inner truth would come out the more fully.

The prime cause of Green's popularity and influence was his originality, and it is the measure of his achievement that we are now in danger of forgetting this. He reconstructed in a single volume the development of a nation, taking cognizance not only of the political but also of the social, the cultural and the religious aspects of its life. His whole method was startlingly novel when he wrote, and it may be

remarked that no one has since accomplished on the same scale the same task for this or, indeed, for any other nation. When Green found it necessary to remark: "As you see in my own Wee Book, I think moral and intellectual facts as much facts for the historian as military facts." He uttered what has now become a truism. But then it was far from a truism. The doctrine was of course not new, but Green was the first resolutely to apply it to the general history of a great nation. And it was exactly on this ground that he had to meet his opponents. Here even his friend Freeman was vehemently opposed to him, and in other quarters the criticism was bitter. By discarding the old regal divisions of English history Green laid himself open to violent attack; and it was then a novel, and to many an unwarrantable, method to "select" devoted more space to Chaucer than to Cressy, to Canon than to the petty strife of Yorkist and Lancastrian, to the Poor Law of Elizabeth than to her victory at Cadz, to the Methodist revival than to the escape of the Young Pretender." That such a view of English development has now become a commonplace is due to Green more than to any other man. As a living intellectual theme pervaded this book which was sold everywhere, so did general English historical studies begin to take on a new orientation.

Green's work was on attempt to translate into historical terms the philosophy of a passionately strenuous life; and herein lies its real importance. Mrs. Green was quite right when she asserted that the story of the "Short History" is the biography of its author. In it we can see the intellectual independence which in its earlier growth manifested itself at Oxford when (in Green's own words) the "little restless animal in black, covetous of applause - sharp, sarcastic, bustling, pressing to the front, revolted against the set curriculum of 'Schools' and refused to take honours. Similarly the general trend of the "Short History" is to be seen already when Green, dependent upon a curriculum of Hoxton, gave up his post of parishioner to his own study, and his much-needed stipend and subsisted upon articles written rapidly during the night after his day's work was done. Cannot the leading characteristics of this oddly passionate text-book be discovered even in that fine face which to-day peers out strangely from conventionalized portraits? History was the ruling passion of his life. It coloured the whole of his youth at Oxford, and it persisted, until the last picture that we have of him is his dictating his last book, his dying breath. At thirty-two the "poor curate" was at the crisis of his life - without a settled income, without hope of advancement, with as yet no solid literary work accomplished, in the grip of a deadly disease which might at any moment cut short his career - yet this was the man who at this time could confidently say: "I shall never be content until I have superseded Hume, and I believe that I shall supersede him." He did. And his achievement was directly due to the fact that his work was a living whole, constructed according to a plan derived from his own philosophy.

His permanent influence is due to the method and the character rather than to the matter of his book. The Bibliographical Society's *Index to Selected Bibliographical Journals 1933-1970* has been long awaited and is now published (Bibliographical Society, £22, 0 19 72177 X). 316 double-column pages provide author and subject indexes to the Society's own *The Library*, the proceedings of the Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Oxford, and American societies, *The Book Collector*, *The Bibliophile*, *Studies in Bibliography* and the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*. As cumulative indexes are lacking for most of these publications, the new Index is likely to establish itself rapidly.

The Bristol Record Society has recently issued *Calendar of the Correspondence of the Smyth Family of Ashton Court, 1548-1642*, edited by J. H. Betty (217pp. £3, postage 6d, 0 701538 0 3). The work is obtainable from the Department of History, Wells Cathedral, Wells, Somerset, BA2 9JL. The whole method was startlingly novel when he wrote, and it may be

Organization man

George Mikes

ZOLTÁN VAS

Vaszonlatgatos életem: Önéletrajz I.
737pp.

Akkori életemről: Önéletrajz II.
695pp. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó.

Zoltán Vas is one of the most colourful of Hungary's post-war Communist leaders. His rise, fall (and rise again) is a thrilling adventure story and a cautionary tale. The two volumes of his memoirs serve as a reminder that while humanity may be in for a rough ride in the near future, next year will not be 1984 in the Orwellian sense.

The son of bourgeois parents, Vas joined the Communist Party at the age of sixteen, during the First World War. After the collapse of the Béla Kun régime in 1919, he, with thousands of others, fled the country. A year later he was sent back to reorganize the Communist youth movement - a dangerous activity, indeed a heinous crime, in Admiral Horthy's Hungary. He was caught and, while some of his fellow-prisoners were given death sentences, he was still under eighteen, was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment. Immediately after his trials, the Soviet authorities rounded up 3,000 Hungarian army officers, still in prisoner-of-war camps in Russia, and threatened to execute them all should the Hungarians start executing the imprisoned Communists. The threats had their intended effect and the Hungarian military hostages were exchanged for the Hungarian Communists, Vas among them.

He went to live in Moscow but two-and-a-half years later he was, once again, back in Hungary, organizing illegal youth cells, this time under the guidance of Mátyás Rákosi. Rákosi had been one of Béla Kun's Commissars, and therefore presented a glittering prize for Horthy's police.

When the prize was captured Vas, with a few others, was also arrested.

There was martial law in Hungary, the military courts could only acquit an accused or sentence him to death. As prisoner was out of the question, the accused fate seemed to be sealed. In spite of this mortal danger Rákosi defended himself with admirable courage and sparkling wit. Vas was no less spirited in his own defence. The trial became a *cause célèbre*. Press campaigns, mass demonstrations all over the world, and other means of pressure forced Horthy's judges to refer the case to the ordinary courts, which saved the lives of the prisoners. Vas was sentenced to sixteen years and served the full sentence, often in the same prison, sometimes in the same cell, as Rákosi. They were maltreated and starved; occasionally they organized hunger-strikes but they survived. In 1940, miraculously, they were exchanged once again, this time during the Hitler-Stalin Pact, for fifty-six flags captured in 1941 by the Russians when they came to the rescue of the defeated Austrians.

In Moscow Vas lived the life of all Hungarian émigrés: visiting prisoner-of-war camps, indoctrinating Hungarian prisoners on broadcasts to Hungary. His finest hour came at the end of the war. He was among the first Communist leaders to return to the country, soon followed by his friend, mentor and former fellow-prisoner, Rákosi. Vas, although for some time regarded as Rákosi's right-hand man, was never among the true post-war ideologues, no policy-maker, just an organizer of genius. It is generally acknowledged that he more than anyone else, succeeded in saving Hungary - and especially Budapest - literally from starvation. It was he who reorganized everyday life in that defeated, demoralized and poverty-stricken land and it was he who stabilized the currency so successfully. Inflation in Hungary then was even worse than in Germany in the 1920s; when the pengő (the old currency) was replaced by the forint, the price of one single forint was 200 million pengős.

Vas was the hero of the land, and, of course, this was his undoing. Rákosi became jealous; Vas was sent to be director of a provincial coal-mine.

But oblivion was not to be his fate. Indeed, now followed the most sinister chapter of his eventful life. Beria, fanning the flames of Stalin's paranoia, convinced the old tyrant that his Jewish doctors ("American spies to a man) were conspiring to kill him. The doctors were arrested and preparations made for their trial and execution. If Russia had antiseptic purge-trials, all the satellites must do so too. This caused a slight embarrassment in Hungary because all three leaders of the country - Rákosi, Gerő and Parkes - were Jews. But, undeterred, singled out a fourth Jew, Vas, as eminently suitable to be purged. Rákosi, while reassuring him of his everlasting friendship, made preparations to sacrifice his former crony, fellow-prisoner and fellow-Jew, and send him to the gallows. Vas was saved by Stalin's death and Imre Nagy's accession to power.

During the 1956 revolution he sided with Imre Nagy. When the Russians reoccupied Budapest, he with other leaders - Imre Nagy among them - sought refuge at the Yugoslav Embassy. A few days later they were offered safe conduct by the Russians, but as soon as they left the Embassy they were arrested and interned in Romania. Imre Nagy was executed. Vas and the others were eventually allowed to return to Budapest where he now lives the life of a retired politician and a tireless writer. His volumes of memoirs are somewhat disorganized, the narrative tends to jump backwards and forwards. Hackneyed party jargon keeps cropping up; the author talks of Eastern democracy and Western imperialism, but I have the vague feeling that what he really has in mind is Eastern Imperialism and Western democracy. The books, all the same, make compulsive reading, written by an old-fashioned patriot, Vas, at the age of eighty, may be a somewhat tame flow, but certainly he is no extinct volcano.

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